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## Collective action : a regulatory focus perspective

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## Chapter 2.

Responding to tokenism:

How promotion and prevention focus affect  
commitment to collective and individual status  
improvement<sup>1</sup>



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## **Introduction**

Despite strong endorsement of meritocracy beliefs (Ellemers & Van Laar, 2010) in reality most societies offer less opportunities for advancement to members of low status groups (e.g. women, ethnic minorities) than to members of high status groups (Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). In these systems (called token systems) social status is distributed partly based on individual merit and partly based on group membership (Wright et al., 1990). This mix between meritocracy and discrimination implies that token systems are ambiguous, and makes it unclear for members of low status groups whether they should try to take advantage of the positive, meritocratic aspects of the social system and pursue individual status improvement, or whether they should address the negative, discriminatory aspects of the system through group status improvement (Wright, 1997). In the current research we investigate how members of disadvantaged groups respond to this ambiguity. We contribute to current insights by connecting knowledge about tokenism with reasoning derived from Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1997). We argue that because individuals under promotion focus tend to act upon the positive aspects of a situation, they should be motivated to exploit the advancement opportunities token systems offer and seek individual status improvement. We predict prevention-oriented individuals to be more likely to act on the negative - discriminatory - aspects of the token system. They should therefore be more inclined to pursue collective status improvement.

In the next section, we will explain how the ambiguity of token systems makes it difficult for members of low status groups to decide between pursuing individual or group status improvement. We then connect these concerns to insights derived from Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1997) to explain how this helps predict and understand when and why members of low status opt for individual or collective status improvement under token conditions.

## **Responding to Tokenism**

In most societies, a person's social status is not only based on individual merit, but also on group membership (cf. Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Wright et al., 1990).

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As a result, members of low status groups tend to receive fewer opportunities for individual status improvement than members of high status groups (Boen & Vanbeselaere, 1998; Lalonde & Silverman, 1994; Reynolds, Oakes, Haslam, Nolan, & Dolnik, 2000; Wright et al., 1990; Wright & Taylor, 1998; 1999). For example, discriminatory practices in hiring and promotion have been shown to make it more difficult for women and ethnic minorities (compared to men and ethnic majorities) to climb the social ladder and raise their status individually (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman, 2001; Crow, Folk, & Hartman, 1998; Morrison, & White, 1988; Schwarz, 1971). Social systems in which status improvement opportunities are based both on merit and on group membership, are called token systems and can be distinguished from fully open systems, in which status distribution is based completely on individual merit, as well as closed systems, in which status distribution is completely based on group membership (Wright et al., 1990). Thus, although token systems offer some opportunities for members of low status groups to achieve higher status individually, they still are discriminatory in that they structurally offer more opportunities to members of high status groups.

Token systems thus create ambiguity for members of low status groups regarding the most appropriate way to behave, because they encompass positive, meritocratic features as well as negative, discriminatory characteristics (Wright, 1997). In this way, tokenism creates a dilemma for members of low status groups, as they have to decide whether to exploit the opportunities offered by the social system – and exert effort to raise their personal standing – or to address the discriminatory aspects of the social system - by working towards group status improvement. Our current aim is to examine how individuals decide between pursuing individual or group status improvement under these conditions. Understanding these types of responses to meritocratic status systems is important, not only to predict the strategies specific individuals are likely to follow to pursue status improvement, but also because of the more profound societal consequences of such responses, which can range from acceptance of the social system to rebellion against it.

To anticipate low status group members' preferences for individual-level or group-level status improvement in token systems we need to understand how they make sense of the ambiguity present in such systems (Wright, 1997). This ambiguity allows

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individuals to view token systems in two ways. Viewed positively, token systems provide members of low status groups with opportunities for individual status improvement. Viewed negatively however, token systems unfairly disadvantage members of low status groups. To be able to predict how members of low status groups decide between pursuing individual or collective status improvement under conditions of tokenism, one therefore needs to understand how they perceive and respond to the positive and negative aspects of this system (Danaher & Branscombe, 2010; Richard & Wright, 2010; Wright, 1997).

In the next section we introduce regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) as a novel approach to the psychology of tokenism. We argue that adoption of a promotion or a prevention focus is relevant in this sense, as this biases individuals towards acting on the positive or the negative aspects of the token system. This in turn should determine the choice they make between striving for individual or group status improvement.

### **The Self-regulation of Responding to Tokenism**

Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) distinguishes between two motivational systems that regulate goal-directed behavior: promotion focus and prevention focus. Promotion and prevention focus serve different needs and differentially affect the way goals are construed and subsequently pursued. Promotion and prevention focus vary in strength both chronically across individuals and momentarily across situations (Higgins, Friedman, Harlow, Idson, & Ayduk, 2001). Promotion focus functions to serve the need for growth and accomplishment. Under promotion focus, motivation is experienced as desire, causing success during goal-pursuit to be seen as more positive than failure is seen as negative (Higgins, Bond, Klein, & Strauman, 1986; Shah & Higgins, 1997). As a consequence, individuals under promotion focus are strategically inclined to approach positive outcomes, rather than avoiding negative outcomes (Crowe and Higgins, 1997). Prevention focus, by contrast, functions to serve the need for safety and security. Under prevention focus, motivation is experienced as necessity, causing failure of goal-pursuit to be seen as more negative than success is seen as positive. Consequently, adoption of

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a prevention focus leads to the strategic inclination to avoid negative outcomes, rather than approaching positive outcomes.

In view of the specific characteristics of these two motivational systems, we argue that activation of a promotion or prevention focus should have important consequences for the way members of low status groups respond to the ambiguity present in token systems and, consequently, for their decision to pursue individual or group status improvement. Because promotion-oriented individuals are strategically inclined to approach positive outcomes they should primarily base their actions on positive aspects of the token system. Likewise, because prevention-oriented individuals are strategically inclined to avoid negative outcomes, their actions should mainly respond to the negative aspects of this system. This bias towards the use of positive or negative cues for action should have especially strong effects in ambiguous situations (i.e. weak situations, Snyder & Ickes, 1985) such as tokenism, where the positive aspects of the situation motivate a fundamentally different course of action than the negative ones. Put differently, when under promotion focus, members of low status groups should be particularly sensitive to the positive aspects of the token system (i.e. the opportunities for individual mobility it provides) and become willing to engage in individual action. When under prevention focus however, members of low status groups should base their behavior on the negative aspects of the token situation (i.e. its restricted nature), causing them to see collective action as the more appropriate course of action. We thus predict that under conditions of tokenism the adoption of a promotion focus should lead to more engagement in efforts towards individual status improvement and less engagement in efforts towards group status improvement than the adoption of a prevention focus. Importantly, when there is no ambiguity about the properties of the situation (e.g., in completely closed conditions) there is no reason to anticipate that action preferences depend on regulatory focus as there is less room for interpretation that would bring to the fore differential sensitivity to specific aspects of the situation.

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## Overview of the Present Research

Two studies were conducted to test our prediction that regulatory focus determines whether members of low status groups pursue individual or group status improvement under conditions of tokenism. A paradigm was used in which participants were members of a low status group that engaged in a competition with a higher status group. We used different ways to examine our predictions. In Study 2.1, regulatory focus was assessed as a chronic individual difference variable, and participants were asked to indicate their preferences for individual vs. group status improvement. In Study 2.2, regulatory focus was experimentally manipulated and we assessed actual efforts towards achieving individual and group status improvement. In both studies the permeability of group boundaries was experimentally induced. We contrasted our focal condition where token permeability was allowed with a control condition where group boundaries were completely closed.

### Study 2.1

#### Method

##### Participants and Design

Eighty-eight female students from Leiden university ( $M_{\text{age}} = 21.65$ ,  $SD = 4.09$ ) participated in this study in exchange for €4.50 or course credit. Promotion vs. prevention focus was assessed as an individual difference variable before the experiment. We manipulated group boundary permeability (closed vs. token) in a between-participants design. Participants' preferences for individual vs. group status improvement served as the dependent variable.

##### Procedure

Participants were told that they would be taking part in two unrelated studies: a short survey and an experiment. The short survey consisted of our pre-measure of regulatory focus. We measured participants' chronic prevention ( $\alpha = .81$ ) and promotion focus ( $\alpha = .68$ ) using the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (Higgins, Friedman, Harlow, Idson, Ayduk, & Taylor, 2001) and created a regulatory focus dominance measure by



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subtracting the standardized prevention scores from the standardized promotion scores. High scores on this variable indicate a dominant promotion focus, low scores a dominant prevention focus (cf. Sassenberg, Jonas, Shah & Brazy, 2007).

Participants were then informed that the first study was completed and that the second study would now commence. This part of the experiment was introduced as a study on competition between groups. To create different groups, all participants were (ostensibly at random) assigned to a team of 4 individuals (Team B), and told that they were going to compete with another team of 4 (Team A). In reality, no teams were formed and all participants worked individually throughout the entire experiment. To increase involvement in the competition, participants were informed that the winning team would get to take part in a fun and interesting task following the experiment, whereas the losing team would have to take part in a more tedious task (Wright et al., 1990). Participants were then told that the competition would consist of two rounds: a preliminary and a final. To allow for the later manipulation of permeability, participants were informed that the team that would win the preliminary would get the chance to influence the rules of the final.

At this point the preliminary commenced. This round consisted of an anagram-task. Participants tried to solve as many five-letter anagrams (e.g. KTAES [SKATE]) as possible in 3 minutes. To create a status difference between the teams, all participants were then informed that their team had solved slightly less anagrams than the other team and that they had thus lost the preliminary (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997; Ellemers, Wilke, & Van Knippenberg, 1993).

To introduce the manipulation of permeability (cf. Ellemers et al., 1997; Wright et al., 1990), participants were told that team A, because it had won the preliminary, would now get to decide whether or not to let one member of the participant's team join team A after the final. If team A would allow this, it was explained, then the members of the participant's team would each have to choose between working for their group (to win the final as a team) and working individually (to gain entry into team A) during the final. If team A would not allow a member of team B to enter their team, participants were told, then they would have no other option but to work for their team if they wanted to win the competition. Finally, all participants were informed that working for themselves during the final would not help their team win the competition, and that

working for their team during the final would not increase their chances of individually entering team A.

At this point the *permeability* of the status difference between the two groups was manipulated. In the *closed* condition, participants were informed that team A had decided not to give the members of Team B the chance to enter team A. In the *token* condition, participants were informed that Team A had decided to let the member of Team B with the highest individual score in the finale enter Team A. Participants were then asked to answer some questions before the final round of the competition would commence. These were the dependent variables.

### Measures

All variables were measured on 9-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 9 (*completely agree*).

*Manipulation check.* The effectiveness of the manipulation of permeability was checked with two items (e.g. “It is possible for a member of my team to enter team A”,  $r(88) = .90, p < .001$ ).

*Preference for individual vs. group status improvement* was measured with six items (e.g. “I intend to solve as many anagrams as possible for myself during the final”, “I intend to solve as many anagrams as possible for my team during the final” [reverse scored],  $\alpha = .78$ ). High scores on this variable indicate a preference for individual status improvement over group status improvement. Participants were then informed that the experiment was finished and the final round of the competition would not take place. They were then fully debriefed, thanked and paid.

## Results

### Manipulation Check

As intended, an ANOVA on the manipulation check showed that participants in the token condition viewed the intergroup structure as more permeable ( $M = 7.35, SD = 1.11$ ) than participants in the closed condition ( $M = 3.27, SD = 2.56, F[1, 87] = 89.51, p < .001, \eta^2 = .51$ ).

### PREFERENCES FOR INDIVIDUAL VS. GROUP STATUS IMPROVEMENT

Participants' preferences for pursuing individual rather than group status improvement were analyzed using hierarchical linear regression. In step 1, the effect-coded manipulation of permeability (-1 for the closed condition, 1 for the token condition) and the standardized regulatory focus measure were entered. Their interaction term was entered in step 2. The results revealed the predicted interaction between the manipulation of permeability and regulatory focus,  $B = 0.37$ ,  $SE = 0.12$ ,  $F(1, 84) = 9.78$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .09$ , see Figure 2.1. As expected, simple slope analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) showed that, in the token condition, chronic promotion focus dominance increased participants' preferences for pursuing individual status improvement over group status improvement,  $B = 0.52$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ,  $F(1, 84) = 9.27$ ,  $p = .002$ . There was no such effect of regulatory focus in the closed condition,  $B = -0.22$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ ,  $F(1, 84) = 1.79$ ,  $p = .18$ .

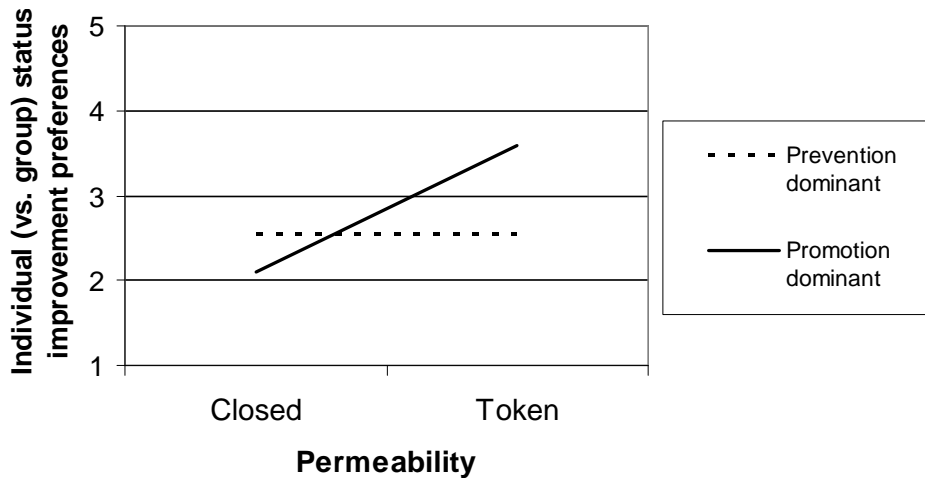


Figure 2.1. Individual (vs. group) status improvement strategies as a function of chronic regulatory focus and permeability (Study 2.1).

### Discussion

Study 2.1 offered preliminary evidence for our prediction regarding the effect of regulatory focus on the choice between pursuing individual and group status improvement in token systems. As predicted, under conditions of token permeability,

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promotion-oriented individuals preferred to pursue more individual status improvement and less group status improvement than individuals under prevention focus. Also as predicted, no such effect of regulatory focus was found when the status hierarchy was closed. Thus, under conditions of token permeability, the adoption of a promotion focus seems to cause members of low status groups to prefer seeking individual status improvement over group status improvement.

This study thus offers initial evidence for our predictions but also has some limitations. First, self-declared preferences for pursuing individual vs. group status improvement that served as the dependent variable in Study 2.1 do not necessarily imply *actual engagement* in efforts towards individual or group status improvement. Second, because regulatory focus was assessed as a chronic individual difference variable in this study, alternative explanations for these results (e.g., due to a third variable that covaries with chronic promotion vs. prevention orientation) can not be ruled out. To be able to draw more unequivocal conclusions, but also with an eye on designing interventions, it would be important to know whether or not the situational adoption of a focus on promotion vs. prevention actually has a causal effect on commitment to individual and group status improvement under token conditions. This is why Study 2.2 included a manipulation of regulatory focus and behavioral measures of engagement in efforts towards individual and group status improvement.

## Study 2.2

### Method

#### Participants and Design

Fifty-nine students from Leiden University (51 women,  $M_{\text{age}} = 20.39$ ,  $SD = 5.12$ ) participated in this study in exchange for €4.50 or course credit. They were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 2 (regulatory focus: promotion or prevention) X 2 (permeability: closed vs. token) experiment. Engagement in efforts towards individual and group status improvement served as the dependent variables.

### Procedure

Study 2.2 employed the same procedure as Study 2.1, with the exception of the added manipulation of regulatory focus and the behavioral measures of efforts towards individual and group status improvement. In the first part, we manipulated regulatory focus with an adapted version of the procedure suggested by Higgins and colleagues (Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes, 1994; see also Zaal, Van Laar, Stahl, Ellemers, & Derks, in press, a; in press, b). Participants wrote about what they would ideally like to achieve (*promotion condition*) or felt they ought to achieve (*prevention condition*) in their working life. According to Higgins and colleagues (1994) the priming of ideals leads individuals to adopt a promotion focus, whereas the priming of oughts causes them to adopt a prevention focus. Participants were then informed that the first part of the experiment was completed and that the second part of the experiment would commence. The procedure of the second part of the experiment was the same as in Study 2.1 up to the measurement of the dependent variables.

### Measures

*The manipulation check of permeability* consisted of the same two items as in Study 2.1 ( $r(59) = .79, p < .001$ ).

*The perceived difficulty of the anagram task* was measured as a control variable using two items (e.g. “I think the anagram task is very difficult/not difficult at all [reverse scored]”,  $r(59) = .71, p < .001$ ).

*Manipulation check of regulatory focus.* The time participants needed to report their (promotion- and prevention-related) emotional states was measured to serve as the check of the regulatory focus manipulation. According to Shah and Higgins (2001), individuals under promotion focus are faster at appraising how cheerful or dejected a stimulus makes them feel, whereas individuals under prevention focus are faster at appraising how quiescent or agitated a stimulus makes them feel. We thus measured participants’ promotion-related (*dejection and cheerfulness*) and prevention-related (*agitation and quiescence*) emotions using six items and recorded the time they needed to indicate their answers. We created a measure of regulatory focus by subtracting the mean log-transformed response-times on the promotion emotions items from the mean log-transformed response-times on the prevention emotion items. High scores on this

variable indicate dominant promotion focus, low scores dominant prevention focus (Zaal et al., in press, a).

In contrast to Study 2.1, Study 2.2 also included the final round of the competition. During this round participants had four minutes to solve five-letter anagrams. Before attempting to solve each anagram, participants had to decide whether they wanted to solve this anagram for their personal benefit (to gain entry into Team A) or for the benefit of their team (to win the group competition against Team A). The number of anagrams participants solved for their team and for themselves were recorded and served as the measures of effort invested in individual and group status improvements (Ellemers, Pagliaro, Barreto, & Leach, 2008). Finally, all participants were debriefed, thanked and paid.

## Results

### Analyses

Both manipulation checks were analyzed with ANOVAs using the manipulations of permeability and regulatory focus as independent variables. Engagement in effort towards individual and group status improvement were analyzed with separate ANCOVAs using the manipulations of permeability and regulatory focus as independent variables and the perceived difficulty of the anagram task as a covariate.<sup>2</sup> Significant interactions were further analyzed with simple effects analyses (Aiken & West, 1991).

### Manipulation checks

As intended, the intergroup boundary was seen as more permeable in the token condition ( $M = 7.16$ ,  $SD = 1.60$ ) than in the closed condition ( $M = 1.77$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ,  $F[1, 57] = 187.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .77$ ). No other effects emerged ( $p$ 's  $> .68$ ). Also as intended, the results of an ANOVA revealed faster responding on the promotion (compared to prevention) emotion items in the promotion condition ( $M = 0.69$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ) than in the prevention condition ( $M = -.58$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ,  $F[1, 50] = 4.60$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ ).<sup>3</sup> No other effects emerged ( $p$ 's  $> .83$ ). Thus, both manipulations were successful.

### Effort towards individual status improvement

The results revealed the predicted interaction between the manipulations of regulatory focus and permeability on the number of anagrams participants solved for themselves,  $F(1, 54) = 4.44$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .08$ , see Figure 2.2. Analyses showed that in the token condition, induction of a promotion focus caused participants to engage in more efforts aimed at individual status improvement than induction of a prevention focus,  $B = 2.64$ ,  $SE = 0.85$ ,  $F(1, 54) = 9.72$ ,  $p = .003$ . No effect of regulatory focus on engagement in effort towards individual status improvement was found in the closed condition,  $B = 0.16$ ,  $SE = 0.81$ ,  $F(1, 54) < 1$ ,  $p = .84$ .

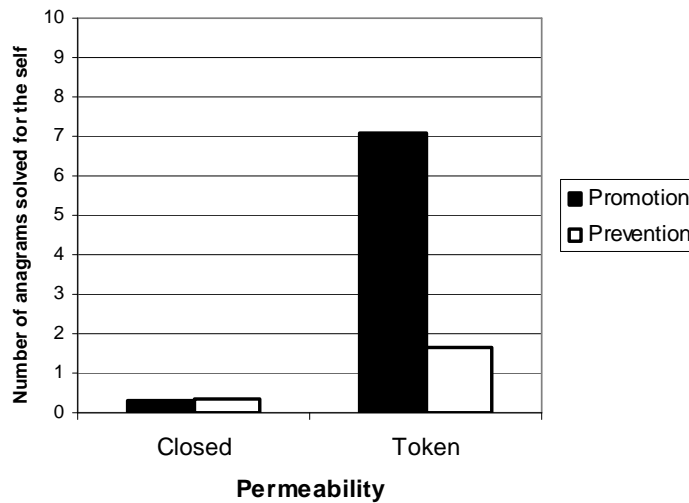


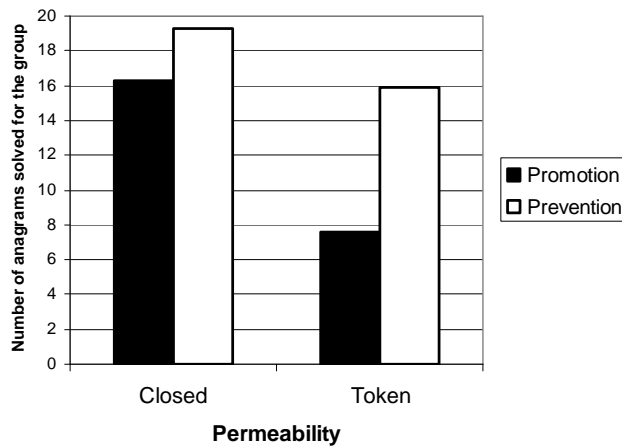
Figure 2.2. Effort towards individual status improvement as a function of the manipulations of permeability and regulatory focus (Study 2.2).

### Effort towards group status improvement

The results revealed the predicted interaction between the manipulations of permeability and regulatory focus on the number of anagrams participants solved for their team,  $F(1, 54) = 4.78$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .08$ , see Figure 2.3. Analyses showed that in the token condition induction of a prevention focus caused participants to spend more effort on group status improvement than induction of a promotion focus,  $B = -4.44$ ,  $SE = 1.19$ ,  $F(1, 54) = 13.87$ ,  $p < .001$ . No effect of regulatory focus on engagement in effort towards group status improvement was found in the closed condition,  $B = -0.82$ ,  $SE = 1.14$ ,  $F(1, 54) < 1$ ,  $p = .47$ .

## Discussion

Study 2.2 replicated the results of Study 2.1 and extended them by employing a manipulation (instead of a measure) of regulatory focus and by using behavioral measures of efforts towards individual and group status improvement. The results provided further evidence for the prediction that adoption of a promotion focus leads members of low status groups to pursue individual status improvement instead of group status improvement under conditions of tokenism. The adoption of a prevention focus, by contrast, was shown to cause individuals to commit to group status improvement, even when there were opportunities for individual status improvement as implied in the token system.



*Figure 2.3.* Effort towards group status improvement as a function of the manipulations of permeability and regulatory focus (Study 2.2).

## General Discussion

The current research was designed to investigate the role of regulatory focus in the choice between pursuing individual and group status improvement. Connecting existing insights on token systems with a self-regulation perspective allowed us to provide important new insights into how members of low status groups respond to token



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systems in which access to the benefits associated with high social status is restricted. According to earlier work (Danaher & Branscombe, 2010; Wright, 1997), token systems are ambiguous and individuals' choices between pursuing personal or group status improvement in these situations depend on whether they recognize, and act on, the positive aspects or the negative aspects of this ambiguous system. Acting on the positive aspects of the token system, such as the fact that it offers low status group members some opportunities for individual status improvement, leads to the pursuit of individual mobility as a status enhancement strategy. By contrast, acting on the negative, discriminatory aspects of token systems leads to the adoption of collective action as a status enhancement strategy. In the current research, we proposed that promotion and prevention focus represent important mechanisms through which members of low status groups make sense of tokenism's ambiguity. We argued that, compared to those under prevention focus, individuals under promotion focus should be more inclined to base their actions on the positive aspects of the token system and hence should be more likely to engage in efforts towards individual status improvement while they tend to commit less effort towards group status improvement in such token systems. Conversely, we argued that individuals under prevention focus should be more likely than individuals under promotion focus to act on the negative aspects of the system and, consequently, to pursue group status improvement.

To investigate this prediction we used a paradigm in which participants were assigned to an experimentally created low status group that engaged in a competition with a high status outgroup. In Study 2.1 we assessed chronic individual differences in promotion and prevention focus prior to the experiment, manipulated the permeability (closed vs. token) of the high status group's boundary and measured preferences for individual vs. group status improvement as a dependent variable. In Study 2.2, we manipulated regulatory focus as well as the possibility of entering the high status outgroup, and measured actual engagement in efforts directed towards individual and group status improvement. Importantly, because of the experimental nature of the studies and the behavioral nature of the dependent variables employed, we can draw firm causal conclusions about actual engagement in efforts towards individual and group status improvement.

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As predicted, under conditions of tokenism participants spent more effort on pursuing individual status improvement and less effort on pursuing group status improvement when promotion focus was chronically dominant (Study 2.1) or experimentally induced (Study 2.2) than when prevention focus was chronically dominant or experimentally induced. No such differences between individuals with a promotion vs. prevention focus were found when the situation was unambiguous – because the boundary of the high status group was closed.

These results have clear implications for both the theory and practice of collective action. First of all, the current research shows that the adoption of a prevention focus can ensure commitment to collective action even in situations in which an individual mobility strategy also appears a seemingly viable alternative strategy towards status improvement. This finding adds to other work that links prevention focus to collective action. More precisely, this work has shown that adoption of a prevention focus (compared to adoption of a promotion focus) makes individuals willing to engage in collective action even when the chances of this action leading to the desired outcome are low (Zaal et al., in press, a). Furthermore, this prior research has shown that prevention-oriented individuals committed to collective action also become willing to engage in more hostile forms of action (Zaal et al., in press, b). Thus, by showing that activation of the prevention focus causes individuals to commit to group status improvement, even when opportunities for individual status improvement exist, the results of the current work complement existing work linking the prevention focus to engagement in collective action.

The current data also have important implications for the practice of collective action. More specifically, they suggest that individuals interested in mobilizing others to the cause of group status improvement in token systems would do well to frame their messages in prevention-oriented terms (e.g. by presenting their goals as oughts rather than ideals). This should lead the targets of such messages to adopt a prevention focus, making it less likely that they will be seduced by the possibility of individual status improvement and abandon efforts towards group status improvement. By contrast, framing the collective action's goal in promotion-oriented terms (e.g. by framing it as an ideal) should be less effective, as this should cause those who consider supporting

the group to adopt a promotion focus and put them at risk of being lured away from engaging in collective action by the possibility of individual status improvement.

### **Conclusion**

The results of two experiments showed that adoption of a promotion focus leads members of a low status group to pursue individual status improvement under conditions of token permeability, whereas the adoption of a prevention focus causes them to pursue group status improvement. No effects of promotion and prevention focus were observed when the properties of the status system were unambiguous, as group boundaries were closed. These results show how recognizing the distinction between promotion and prevention orientations can help us understand how low status group members make sense of token situations, as they focus on different situational aspects and the (im-)possibilities for status improvement these imply as a way to decide which course of action to adopt.

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Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on Zaal, Van Laar, Ståhl, Ellemers, and Derks (2011a)

<sup>2</sup> The measures of engagement in efforts towards group and individual status improvement would be interdependent when all participants would complete the same number of anagrams. Instead, these two measures were only modestly correlated ( $r(59) = -.44, p < .001$ ), indicating that effort exerted not only refers to the choices made for each anagram (i.e., to work at individual vs. group status improvement) but also to the number of anagrams solved during the four minutes they were allotted. To make sure that these differences were due to participants' level of motivation, not their level of ability, we controlled for perceived difficulty of the anagram task in these analyses.

<sup>3</sup> Although we analyzed the log-transformed mean response latencies, we report the untransformed mean response latencies and their standard deviations (in seconds) here in order to facilitate interpretation of the results.

