

# Self-exploration experiences provide more support for fundamental psychological needs than self-control experiences

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More in depth content and full methodology here.

## Highlights

- This study examined ratings of need support in promotion and prevention experiences, specifically experiences of self exploration and self-control.
- The needs were for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.
- Competence support was high and did not differ between conditions.
- Autonomy and relatedness were higher in promotion focused experiences.
- These findings suggest that promotion focus is a more positive experience than prevention focus.

## Summary

Our team conducted research on regulatory focus and its relationship with need support. Regulatory focus involves how people pursue their goals; promotion focus involves approaching goals with eagerness while prevention focus involves approaching goals with vigilance. Vaughn (2017) explored regulatory focus as hopes versus duties and found that participants reported higher support autonomy, competence, and relatedness with hopes. Hopes and duties are well-understood, but people may assume that hopes are much more satisfying than duties. There are other ways to operationalize promotion and prevention focus, and in this research we used self-exploration and self-control, respectively. The results showed that participants felt more autonomous and felt like they related more to others in experiences of self-exploration.

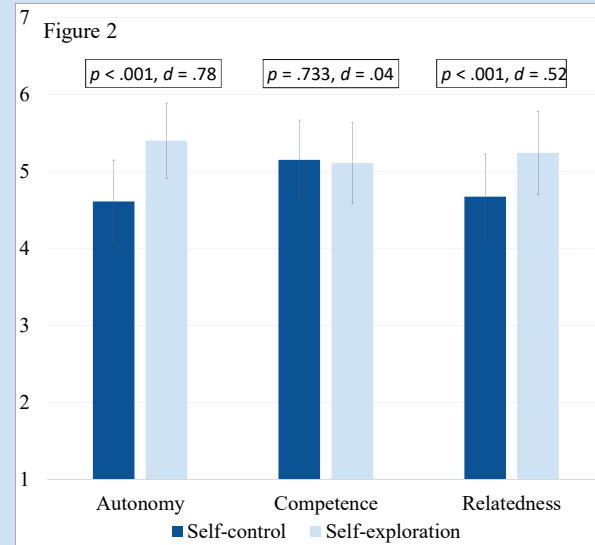
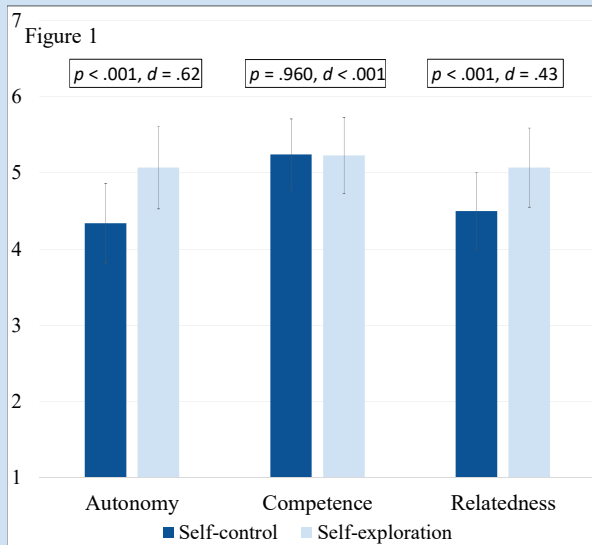
## Methodology

This study had two samples. Participants were adult American and Canadian MTurk workers. Sample 1 had 394 participants and Sample 2 had 352 participants. The participants were randomly assigned to describe an experience of self-exploration (exploring a new activity or something that interested them about themselves) or self-control. The participants then responded to the Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs (BMPN; Sheldon & Hilpert, 2012), to measure their need-support. The Cronbach's alphas for autonomy, competence, and relatedness in Sample 1 were .64, .64, and .77, respectively, and in Sample 2 were .65, .86, and .65, respectively. See QR code for the full methodology and traditionally formatted poster contents.

Analyses were independent-samples *t*-tests. Results for Sample 1 and 2 are displayed in Figure 1 and 2, respectively. Error bars indicate *SDs*.

## Limitations and Future Research

Retrospective self-reports and culture are limitations of the current research. Retrospective reports might not reflect what people think about when engaging in self-exploration or self-control. Participants in these studies resided in the US and Canada, which have looser norms than many other nations (Gelfand et al., 2011). People in cultures with tighter norms could view self-control more positively. Future research could see whether the current results replicate with current experiences in different cultures.



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