Pursuing Goals with Others

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Abstract

This article explores motivation in a social context: how people pursue goals with others, with information on others, and for the self and others. As people incorporate close others into their extended selves (Aron et al., 1991), they begin to treat others' actions and outcomes as partially their own. This tendency, in turn, has implications for coordinating goal pursuits with others and for the preference for actions that maximize the total benefits for the self and others. To demonstrate these principles – coordination and joint-benefits maximization – we first explore coordination in pursuing goals with others (i.e., working in teams), showing that people respond to others' actions and lack of action similarly to how they respond to their own actions and lack of action. We next explore coordination in pursuing goals with information on others, showing that people conform to others' preferences and attitudes yet choose actions that complement others' actions. Finally, we review research on pursuing goals for the self and others, showing that people wish to maximize the total benefits for the group.

Our most important goals are those we pursue with others. Be it business success, starting a family, or making a research discovery, a goal often requires a joint effort by a group of individuals. Moreover, other people support our personal goals by providing feedback (Ashford et al., 2003; Crommelinck & Anseel, 2013; Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012), monitoring our behavior (Fishbach & Trope, 2005; Na & Paternoster, 2012; Tucker & Anders, 2001), and serving as role models (Lockwood et al., 2002; Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). And, naturally, the presence of others can also sway us from our goals, for example, when others are bad role models (John & Norton, 2013; Linardi & McConnell, 2011) or encourage us to procrastinate, overeat, drink, or cheat (Christakis & Fowler, 2007; Carrell, Hoekstra, & West, 2011). Realizing the social context of goals, we explore how people pursue goals (1) with others – when working in teams, (2) with information on others – when working alone, and (3) for the self and others – when working alone for a team. For example, we explore how team members coordinate their efforts, when people conform to others, and how people allocate resources to the self and others.

Whereas traditionally, research has focused on individuals working individually to achieve their individual goals (Higgins, 1987; Carver & Scheier, 1998; Gollwitzer, 1999; Kuhl, 1985), more recent research has shifted toward exploring motivation in a social context. For example, recent research explores motivation in the context of interpersonal relationships and how people support and hinder each other's goal pursuits (Fitzsimons & Finkel, 2010; Fitzsimons et al., 2015; Shah, 2003). In exploring social contexts, our basic premise is that the experience of connection matters and people's self-definitions largely overlap. The boundaries between the self and others are not clear cut, as people are psychologically connected and experience each other's identities, actions, and outcomes as partially their own. Indeed, "you and I" more often becomes "we" (Aron et al., 1991; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Burger et al., 2004; Cialdini et al., 1997; McCulloch et al., 2011; Monin et al., 2004; Wesselmann et al., 2009), and people define

themselves by their relationships with other individuals or groups (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Tajfel, 1972; Turner et al., 1987).

For example, to demonstrate the self–other overlap and inclusion of others in the self, Aron et al. (1991) measured how quickly people sort personal traits as "me" versus "not me." Participants were quicker to sort traits that were either true or false for both themselves and their romantic partner than traits that were true only for one of those targets – the self or the romantic partner. Other studies showed that participants were quicker to sort traits that both they and their in-group possessed than traits only one of these targets possessed (Smith & Henry, 1996). As yet another demonstration, studies have found that as people become closer, they use the pronoun "we" instead of "(s)he and I" to refer to the self and the other in conversation (Agnew et al., 1998; Cialdini et al., 1976; Dovidio et al., 1991; Fiedler et al., 1991).

The premise that people see themselves as connected to others has important motivational consequences. Here, we identify two basic self-regulatory principles that result from self–other overlap: (1) *Coordination* – people coordinate their actions with others; and (2) *joint-benefits maximization* – people choose actions that optimize the outcome for the group as a whole.

In the rest of this article, we explore these principles across several motivational phenomena that we have studied in recent years. First, we explore contributions to a shared goal ("pursuing goals with others"). According to the principle of coordination, we argue that information on others' existing and missing contributions influences one's own contributions to a shared goal as much as information on one's own existing and missing contribution (Fishbach et al., 2011; 2014; Koo & Fishbach, 2008). Second, we explore how people regulate their actions when pursuing goals others also pursue ("pursuing goals with information on others"). According to the principle of coordination, we expect people to coordinate with others by adopting their preferences but to choose different actions, so they do not repeat the same action (Tu & Fishbach, 2015). We also explore how and when people vicariously satiate on others' actions (Tu & Fishbach, 2016). Finally, we explore the principle of joint-benefits maximization in "pursuing goals for the self and others." As we demonstrate, people often strive to maximize the total benefits for the self–other collective, while focusing less on who gets what (Tu et al., 2016).

These motivational phenomena increased with interpersonal closeness, yet they are not unique to close relationships; we also observe them in shallow relationships between acquaintances or ad hoc team partners. Moreover, not only does closeness result in coordination and joint-benefits maximization; it is also the outcome of these processes. Thus, having links among people's goals and working toward common goals are not only outcomes; they are leading factors in the process of becoming closer – the transition from two independent self-regulating agents to a multi-person, interdependent, self-regulating system.

Pursuing Goals with Others

People strategically coordinate actions with others. As an initial demonstration, research on transactive memory (Wegner et al., 1991) demonstrated that people use others' minds as external information storage. They perceive they have access to the same information others have and are less inclined to learn new information if others around them already know it (see also Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007; McCulloch et al., 2011). Moving beyond such division of labor in learning tasks, research on shared goals has explored whether people respond to others' contributions to a shared goal similarly to how they respond to their own contributions to a personal goal. Building on earlier work showing that people in close (communal) relationships deliberately engage in behaviors that make determining which partner made which contributions to a shared goal difficult (Clark, 1984), more

recent research has explored whether people respond to others' actions similarly to how they respond to their own actions.

Shared goals are those goals that a collection of individuals work together to achieve, for example, engaging in social movements, pledging to charity, generating ideas in team meetings, and accomplishing household chores. Research on shared goals has specifically explored how people respond to information on others' existing and missing contributions (Fishbach et al., 2010; 2014; Koo & Fishbach, 2008). According to the coordination principle, people respond to others' existing and missing contributions similarly to how they respond to their own existing and missing contributions.

Thus, for personal goals, research on the dynamics of self-regulation explored how people adjust their effort with respect to their own previous actions and lack of action (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005; Fishbach et al., 2006; Fishbach & Zhang, 2008; Fishbach et al., 2009). This research distinguishes between a dynamic of highlighting, by which actions reinforce each other (e.g., after accomplishing one household chore, the person is motivated to accomplish another chore), and a dynamic of balancing, by which actions substitute for each other (e.g., after accomplishing one household core, the person has lower motivation to accomplish another chore; see also Dhar & Simonson, 1999). What determines whether actions highlight (reinforce) or balance each other is the subjective meaning of the action for the pursuer. When the action signals commitment and personal confidence, it motivates a choice of similar actions (Bem, 1972; Cialdini et al., 1995). When the (often same) action signals that progress has been made, it justifies disengagement with the goal (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Higgins, 1987; Locke & Latham, 2002; Monin & Miller, 2001). For example, if the household-chore pursuer feels more committed as a result of paying the bills, he might next buy groceries (highlighting), whereas if he feels progress has been made once the bills are paid, he might forgo further house chores (balancing). One major factor that influences how people perceive their actions is their level of commitment. Low-commitment individuals who question their own commitment perceive their actions as a signal of commitment and highlight. By contrast, high-commitment individuals who do not question their commitment perceive their actions as a signal of progress and balance (Fishbach et al., 2006; Koo & Fishbach, 2008).

In the context of shared goals, Koo and Fishbach (2008) tested whether low-commitment individuals further highlight other group members' actions; others' actions (versus lack of) increase their commitment and thereby their motivation. In addition, high-commitment individuals were expected to balance for other group members: others' lack of action signals to them a lack of progress and motivates them more than if others were taking action. In this way, people respond to others' action and lack of action similarly to how they respond to their own action or lack thereof.

These processes were demonstrated in a field experiment with a charity organization – Compassion International – in the context of a campaign to support AIDS orphans. The solicited population included uncommitted supporters, who had not contributed before (the "cold list"), and committed supporters, who had donated on a regular basis over the past year (the "hot list"). They all learned about the campaign goal (to raise 10 million won) and that approximately half the money had already been raised. Some participants received a solicitation letter that emphasized the glass was half full (other group members had donated half); the rest received a letter that emphasized the glass was half empty (half was still missing). As predicted, among low-commitment people, an emphasis on existing contributions increased donations more than an emphasis on missing contributions, because they were highlighting others' actions. In contrast, among high-commitment people, an emphasis on missing contributions increased donations more than an emphasis on existing contributions, because they were balancing for others' lack of action (Figure 1). This pattern is almost identical to the one
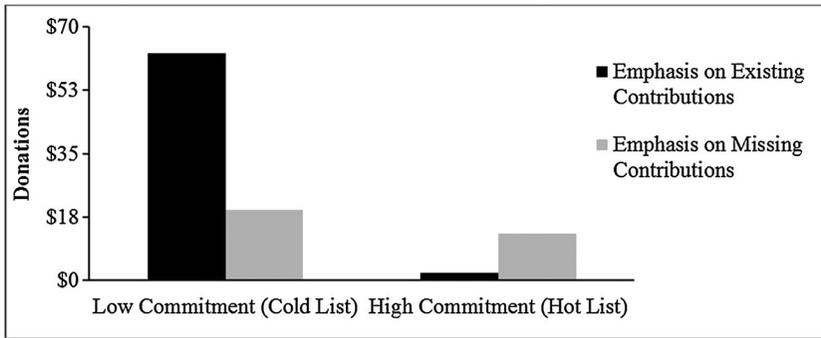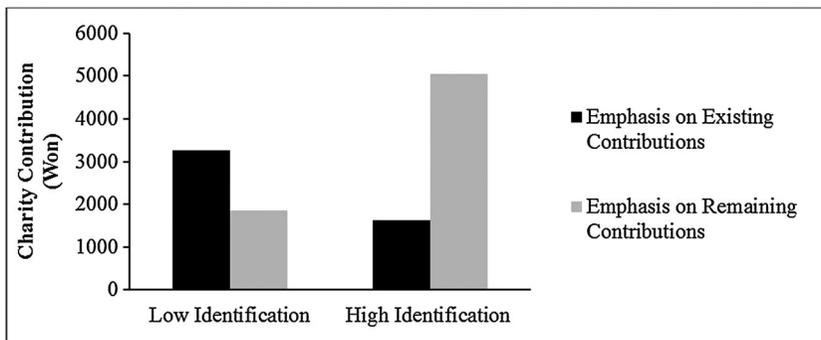
Figure 1 Low-commitment individuals donated more to a charity campaign when considering existing (versus missing) contributions by others. High-commitment individuals donated more when considering missing (versus existing) contributions by others.

observed for personal goal pursuits (e.g., deciding to study for an exam based on what one did versus did not; Koo & Fishbach, 2008).

Another study (Fishbach et al., 2011) operationalized goal commitment through group identification (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Doosje et al., 2006). A campaign to help children in Kenya was established following a period of political riots. In the high-identification condition, the solicitation letter referred to the children in need as "our children," whereas in the low-identification condition, they were presented as the "children in Kenya." In addition, the solicitation letter either emphasized others' actions – that to this point, others had raised about half the money – or lack of action – that half the money was missing. As expected, low identifiers highlighted others' actions; they gave more after reading that others had given half the money than after reading that half the money was missing. By contrast, high identifiers balanced for others' actions; they gave more in response to a message on missing (versus existing) contributions (Figure 2).

Moving beyond the findings that people respond to others' actions similarly to how they respond to their own actions, other studies tested whether messages on "expressing support" and "making a difference" tap into two different motivations in coordinating contributions to a shared goal: to express commitment to the cause via widespread symbolic giving (everyone gives a little) or to make progress on solving a problem via a substantial resource investment by fewer individuals (few give a lot; Koo et al., 2015). These studies assessed effects on both the number of contributors (participation rates) and the average contribution size and found that

Figure 2 Low identifiers donated more to a charity campaign when considering existing (versus missing) contributions by others. High identifiers donated more when considering missing (versus existing) contributions by others.

an appeal to express support increased the participation rate, whereas an appeal to make a differ-ence increased the average contribution. For example, in one study, visitors to a university website were invited to write a message to children in poverty, and the university donated $0.01 per written word on their behalf. Using this paradigm, lengthier messages would result in larger donations. Participants were either invited to "express support" or "make a difference" or received a control ("help") message. Results showed that more people decided to participate in the express-support appeal, but those who participated wrote lengthier messages in the make-a-difference appeal (Figure 3).

Taken together, research reviewed here shows that people respond to others' contributions and lack of contributions to a shared goal similarly to how they respond to their own existing and missing contributions to personal goals. This research has implications for understating the origins of social loafing. Whenever individuals decrease their contributions if others contrib-ute, we can refer to them as "free riders" because others' contributions justify the individuals' loafing. However, whenever individuals decrease their contributions if others did not contrib-ute (and increase if others contributed), we can no longer refer to them as free riders, because free-riding assumes the opposite pattern of coordination, whereby the person loafs if others work. In the latter case, loafing individuals are not free-riding on others' efforts but rather are adopting a perceived norm of low commitment and low contributions to the shared goal.

Pursuing Goals with Information on Others

Whereas coordination is necessary for shared goals, perhaps surprisingly, people also coordinate pursuit of their personal goals. However, a brief observation of people's products, clothing, and food choices reveals that they are not only influenced by others, they also coordinate with others by making complementary choices.

The reason people coordinate what they buy, wear, and eat is that they see themselves as part of others (self–other overlap). Indeed, people experience others' goal pursuits as partially their own (Ackerman et al., 2009; Gunia et al., 2009; Maner et al., 2002; Monin et al., 2004). For instance, people perceive themselves as more generous after watching a close other helping someone (Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007) and lonelier after observing others being rejected (Wesselmann et al., 2009). In addition, after watching another person exert efforts on a goal, people relaxed their efforts (McCulloch et al., 2011), and after learning their group was moral,
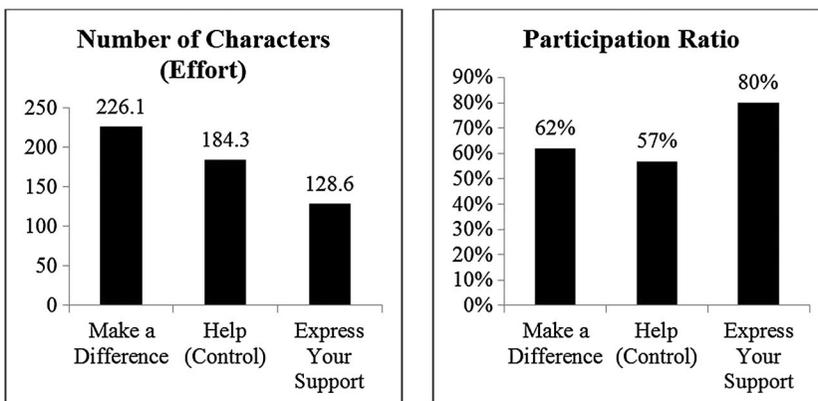
Figure 3 A "Make a Difference" (progress) solicitation increased average contributions (length of messages) compared to control and "Express Your Support" (commitment) solicitations. "Express Your Support" solicitations increased the partic-ipation ratio compared to control and "Make a Difference" solicitations.

people acted less morally (i.e., relaxed their moral efforts; Kouchaki & Smith, 2013). In this sec-
tion, we accordingly explore how these patterns of coordination influence the degree to which
people conform to others versus choose complementary actions.

Choice Conformity

The pressure to conform – among the strongest social forces – has captivated classic and modern
research in the behavioral sciences. Information on what other people like and do is readily
available and tends to engender conformity (Asch, 1956; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Milgram
et al., 1969). For example, people's music and fashion choices often bear similarities to others'.
And whereas conformity is common between friends, people also conform to unknown in-
group members, for example, to their online community.

Conformity is partially driven by normative influence, that is, the social benefits (e.g.,
approval and affiliation) that conforming to others engenders and the penalties
(e.g., disapproval) that not conforming engenders (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Griskevicius
et al., 2006). In addition, conformity is driven by informational influence: the perception that
others' preferences and actions are the best ones (e.g., social proof and the wisdom of the crowd;
Simmons et al., 2011; Surowiecki, 2005). Most relevant here, conformity is also the result of
self–other overlap; people adopt others' attitudes, preferences, and judgments as their own
and therefore conform (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Thus, not only do people adopt others' atti-
tudes and preferences in an effort to "overlap" with others, but they also conform because they
perceive such overlap with others (Lieberman, 2013).

However, social influence does not always take the form of conformity, and individuals
sometimes choose to pursue different actions, consume different products, or acquire different
knowledge than others because they want to complement what others already do, possess, or
know. Such divergence (i.e., choosing differently) can at times reflect a desire to appear unique
and different (Ariely & Levav, 2000; Tian & Bearden, 2001; Simonson & Nowlis, 2000; Irmak
et al., 2010); however, it more often reflects a desire to complement what others have. Because
people see others as part of themselves, they are often compelled to choose items that comple-
ment (i.e., go with) rather than repeat others' choices. For example, if a person feels she vicar-
iously owns her friend's art, she would choose different paintings to decorate her house, not
because she wishes to be unique but because she wishes to have art that complements her
friend's.

The assumption that people mentally share others' preferences and actions has implications
for when we should expect coordination to result in conformity versus complementarity.
When sharing a preference (or attitude), individuals adopt others' preferences as their
own, and we should expect conformity, such that people express similar views to others.
By contrast, when sharing an action, individuals feel that they, in a way, have acted too,
and they are expected to diverge by choosing complementary actions. In this way, mental
sharing implies that when people learn about others' preferences, they will like and more
often choose the target items, but when they learn about others' actions, they will feel less
compelled to make the same choice "again." This response occurs because the expression of
different preferences results in (undesirable) internal inconsistency, whereas the expression of
different actions results in (desirable) variety. The result is that once others have acted on
their preferences (e.g., bought the item and eaten the food), people will be less likely to
conform and more likely to choose something else that complements others' choices and en-
riches their own experience. For example, once people learn that another person likes some
brand of furniture, they may want to get it. But if the person has already decorated her liv-
ing room with this brand, people would feel that they vicariously and partially own these

items too. Consequently, they would want to choose something that complements their friend's choice.

Tu and Fishbach (2015) tested whether individuals conform less to information on others' choices when these choices convey action, or are accompanied by action, rather than when these choices convey only preference (the "words–speak–louder effect"). They limited their investigation to freely chosen actions, such that an action always implied a preference (i.e., no mandatory and imposed actions) and they compared a choice that reflected a preference only (e.g., liking something) with a choice that reflected a preference plus action (e.g., liking something and getting it too). When comparing these conditions, the researchers observed more conformity in the preference-only conditions.

For example, in one of their studies, pairs of participants evaluated chewing gum. In the preference condition, the first person of the pair chose one of two flavors of gum based on which one he or she liked better without actually eating the gum. In the action condition, the first person of the pair chose the flavor of gum that he or she wanted to taste and actually chewed it. The researchers were interested in the behavior of the second person of the pair. Pure conformity would predict that the second person would be likely to mimic the first person's stated preference and his or her actual consumption by choosing the same flavor. However, if the stated preference leads to greater conformity but the actual consumption leads to greater complementarity, the second person might conform in the preference condition but choose the other flavor in the action condition. In support of this hypothesis, the second person was less likely to conform (i.e., choose the same flavor) when the first person actually tasted the gum (action condition) compared to when he or she had merely indicated a preference for a flavor (preference condition). Other studies further provided evidence for mental sharing as the underlying cause for the words–speak–louder effect. Thus, one study found that people (falsely) "recall" greater past consumption of items that others have had versus items that others have indicated they prefer. For example, upon learning that others frequently consume (versus strongly like) a specific breakfast food, participants remembered consuming this food more recently and more frequently. Moreover, people mentally share close others' actions more than distant others' actions; for example, people feel that they share the traits of their significant others, in–group members, or those with whom they identify, more than the traits of distant others (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992; Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007; Norton et al., 2003; Smith, Coats, & Walling, 1999; Smith & Henry, 1996). Because mental sharing underlies these effects, individuals conform less to the actions than the preferences of close others (friends and in–group members) compared with distant others. With close others, people are more likely to feel they have "done" these actions too, so that these actions do not need to be repeated.

Another study more directly tested the assumption that people show less conformity to others' actions rather than preferences, because they seek complementary actions. Participants in this study were run in pairs and took turns choosing between green and blue luggage tags that were either framed as complementing each other (i.e., "together, they enhance each other and make a harmonious set which is visually pleasant.") or framed as contradicting each other (i.e., "when put together, they undermine each other and make an unharmonious set which is visually unpleasant."). Results showed that when the colors were said to complement each other, the majority of the participants chose the same luggage tag their partner "indicated he or she preferred" (preference condition), but only a minority chose the same tag that their partner "chose to have" (action condition), which suggests greater conformity to preference than action. By contrast, when the colors were said to contradict each other, there was no effect for the first person's choice on the second participant's choice (Figure 4). Thus, people want to enrich their experience by choosing differently; however, if the options contradict each
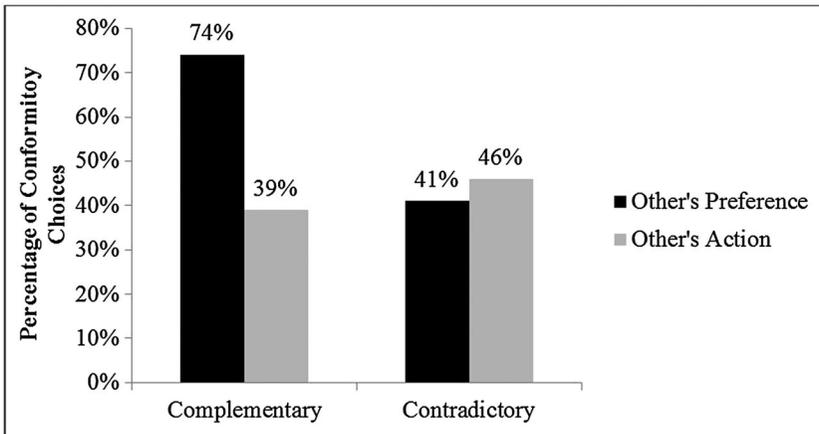
Figure 4 Participants conformed more to a study partner's preference (liking for a tag) versus action (getting a tag) only when the choice options for color tags were said to be complementary (versus contradictory).

other, they gain little from "owning" them both, and the principles of coordination and complementary choice will not guide their behavior.

Of course, people might also choose differently not because they want to complement what others have but because they want to signal their unique identity (Brewer, 1991; Snyder & Fromkin, 1977). Whereas uniqueness and complementarity motives could, at times, produce a similar effect, uniqueness-seeking implies less conformity to others' actions than preferences when the items in a set contradict each other because choosing differently from a contradicting set provides a greater signal of uniqueness. By contrast, the above study found less conformity to actions only when the items in the choice set complemented each other.

These patterns of coordination by which group members express similar preferences yet take complementary actions have implications for persuasive appeals across various contexts. For example, Tu and Fishbach (2015) documented greater conformity to community members' preferences (e.g., number of "likes" on YouTube) than actions (e.g., number of "views" on YouTube). Similarly, in encouraging people to vote, community members who recommend voting might be more effective than those who emphasize they have voted.

Satiation on Others' Actions

If people include close others in their self-definitions, they might be able to satiate on others' actions. For example, people could satiate on others' food consumption such that they feel full when watching another person eat. Tu and Fishbach (2016) explored this possibility, predicting that watching another person consume food would sway one to desire less of that food, postpone its consumption, or eat something else.

Notably, perceiving another person eating can also activate the desire to eat, because actions activate goals (Aarts et al., 2004), and specifically, people eating together tend to consume similar amounts (Conger et al., 1980; Nisbett & Storms, 1974). Thus, in itself, watching someone eat could increase the appetite. However, beyond the general impact on appetite, satiation occurs on the level of the specific flavor or food type (Inman, 2001; Rolls et al., 1981), and people seek variety when they can switch to other food options. It follows that when several food offerings are available (i.e., alternative exists), watching another person eat something satiates the desire for that particular item and increases consumption of alternatives.

In an experiment that assessed vicarious satiation (Tu & Fishbach, 2016), participants postponed consumption of food that their friend had by having a different food first. Specifically, participants saw their study partner either evaluating the wrapper design of a candy without eating it, or eating and evaluating the taste of a candy. They then received the same candy and a candy of a different flavor, and their task was to consume and evaluate both in any order. Findings show that most of the participants (73%) chose the order that postponed consumption of the flavor their study partner ate, whereas less than half (46%) chose the order that postponed consumption of the flavor their study partner had received but did not eat.

In another study, participants rated their desire for sweets after watching another person eat a large versus small quantity of candies (M&Ms). Consumption of larger quantities by another resulted in lower desire for M&Ms. But notably, watching another person consume a large quantity reduced observers' desire for M&Ms only in the presence of alternatives (e.g., salty food). In the absence of alternative food, observing higher consumption did not satiate participants.

This research on vicarious satiation shows people coordinate with others even on goals that are clearly personal (food consumption) because another person's eating cannot satisfy one's nutritional needs. Perceptions of self–other overlap appear to result in coordination even in situations in which the adaptive value of coordination is less clear.

Pursuing Goals for the Self and Others

We next explore situations in which people pursue goals for the self and others and need to decide on a course of action based on the benefits for the self, other, and the self–other collective. For example, when booking a flight for a joint trip, people may contemplate which airline to choose so that both they and a colleague will receive mileage benefits. Or when selecting gifts, people sometimes receive bonuses such that their choice involves consideration of both the benefit their gift recipient gets (from the gift) and the benefit they get (from the bonus). In these situations, people may choose based on self-benefits (what they get), other-benefits (what the other gets), and total benefits (what the collective gets in total). Whereas clearly people care about optimizing self-benefits and they often care about the other, the joint-benefits-maximization principle predicts people pay special attention to total benefits beyond who gets what. To assess people's concern with maximizing total benefits, researchers needed to measure preference between two or more options for resource allocation that vary not only by the allocation of resources between team members but also by the total benefits (the size of the pie). Thus, whereas researchers often measure preference for allocating resources in a fixed-pie situation – who gets what, as in, for example, the dictator and ultimatum games (Camerer, 2011; Güth et al., 1982) – these paradigms cannot assess attention to and concern for total benefits. In situations in which the total benefits do vary, the principle of joint-benefits maximization predicts that people will choose to increase the total benefits for the group regardless of whether, by doing so, they give more to others or take more for the self. It further predicts that the closer people feel to the other, the more likely they will be to choose based on total benefits because they perceive greater self–other overlap.

Specifically, with regard to giving to others, people should be willing to give more to a close (versus distant) other to increase total benefits. As Wegner and Giuliano (1980), willingness to give to close others may "stem in part from a basic confusion between ourselves and others" (p. 133). However, closeness should increase giving also for other reasons (Cialdini et al., 1997; Batson, 1997; Clark, 1983; Jarymowicz, 1992). After all, people may simply care more about the welfare of close others. By contrast, with regard to taking, if people are more likely to take (i.e., choose the allocation that benefits them) from close than from distant others,

and if they do so only when taking increases the total for the collective, researchers have clear evidence that people are maximizing total benefits.

To test the prediction for taking, Tu et al. (2016) offered participants a choice between two "chocolate-tasting" packages for them and their (close or distant) friend: Package A offered two truffles for the participants and four truffles for the friend (six in total). Package B offered seven truffles for the participants and three truffles for the friend (ten in total). In this allocation, the self-maximizing ("taking") option B also maximized the total benefits for the self–other collective. Results showed the majority of participants who made a decision for themselves and a close friend chose to maximize total benefits through "taking" (63% chose Package B), but only a minority of the people who made a decision for themselves and a distance friend chose to take (35% chose Package B).

This experiment demonstrated the "friendly taking effect": a tendency for people in close (versus distant) relationships to prefer a self-benefiting package when this package also offers greater total benefit to the self–other collective. In another experiment, the researchers used a referral program whereby participants signed up themselves and a friend to a mailing list in return for a gift card for each party. The participants chose between two delivery options that varied in the delay of receiving the gift card, which presumably everyone preferred to receive sooner rather than later. Specifically, in the "taking condition," the choice was between "A. Your prize is delivered in 3 days; your friend's prize is delivered in 50 days. (Total waiting time: 53 days)," and "B: Your prize is delivered in 50 days; your friend's prize is delivered in 13 days. (Total waiting time: 63 days)." In the "giving condition," the friend and the self were switched in the above options. Results showed that participants were more likely to choose the option that minimized the prize-delivery time for the self–other collective (Option A; together they will get it sooner) when the other was close (versus distant), regardless of who personally benefited from that option, they or their friend (see Figure 5).

Other studies tested the assumption that close friends pay more attention to the total benefits for the group. Thus, in one study, participants read a scenario in which they had to choose between two massage packages, each offering a free massage for the participant and his or her friend. The difference between the packages was in the length of the massage for each party (self and friend) and for the group in total. Participants read that they could only view one of the three types of information: self-benefit (how many minutes they would get in each package), other-benefit (how many minutes their friend would get in each package), and total benefit (how many minutes in total each package would give). Sixty-two percent of the participants
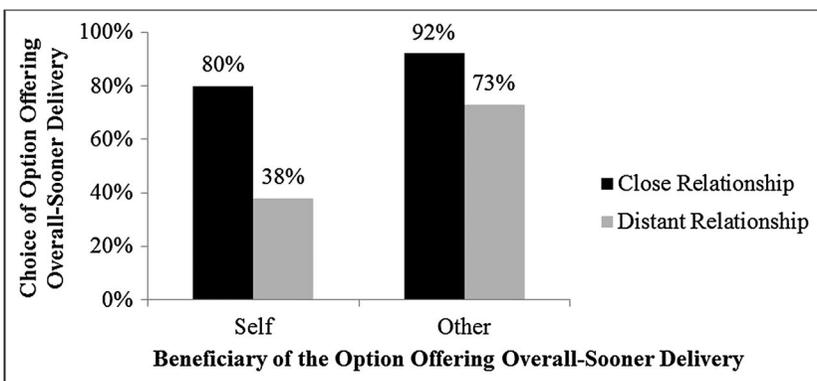
Figure 5 Interpersonal closeness increases preference for the option offering overall-sooner delivery times, regardless of whether this option benefits the self (taking) or the other (giving).

chose to view information on the total benefit when the other person was a close friend, but only 42% of them chose to view information on the total when the friend was a casual acquaintance.

Taken together, these experiments provide evidence that people focus more on the total benefit when the other person is close rather than distant. This attention to maximizing total benefits leads to reduced concerns regarding who gets what, and ironically, at times, it leads to greater willingness to take from close others.

Conclusions

Most people, most of the time, are not pursuing their goals alone. Rather, we are part of a social network and perceive our identities as overlapping with others with whom we work toward various personal and shared goals (Lieberman, 2013). Indeed, the "me" is very often "we." In this article, we identified two principles that govern pursuit of goals with others, with information on others and for the self and other: (1) action coordination and (2) joint-benefits maximization.

We explored these principles across three contexts. First, we reviewed evidence that in pursuing goals with others, people coordinate resource investment such that they respond to others' actions (and lack of action) similarly to how they respond to their own actions (and lack of action). Second, we explored coordination in pursuing goals with information on others, showing that people conform to others' preferences yet complement others' actions and that the vicarious experience of others' actions results in satiation. Finally, we explored goal pursuit for the self and others. In accordance with the principle of joint-benefits maximization, we observed that people in closer relationships choose their actions to maximize the total resources for the group, regardless of who benefits more.

The research we reviewed here on motivation in a social context documented similar principles in pursuit of low-level goals (e.g., food choice) and high-level goals (e.g., charity campaigns). This research further documented similar principles in pursuing shared goals and individual goals. The social context appears to influence goal pursuit across various goal levels (from general to specific) and contexts.

Research reviewed here on coordination and joint-benefits maximization has implications more broadly for social influence and persuasion. Organizations and individuals who wish to encourage certain behaviors in others can utilize people's desire to coordinate with others. For example, political campaigns can highlight others' positive attitudes toward donating money or voting to influence people to contribute resources, and marketers can provide information on others' preferences to influence consumption. We note, however, that research on social influence, unlike research on motivation in a social context, does not require that people be motivated to coordinate. Hence, it is broader than our current scope. We also note that research reviewed here, mainly coming from our lab, echoes other research that studied patterns of coordination in groups. Thus, we observe coordination when people in communal relationships avoid keeping a record of resource contributors (Clark, 1983), when people in groups "share their reality" by sharing and communicating similar thoughts and feelings about an object or a situation in groups (Hardin & Higgins, 1996), and when romantic partners support each other's academic, health, and professional goal pursuits (Finkel, Fitzsimons, & vanDellen, 2015). The principles of coordination and joint-benefits maximization can thus explain a variety of documented motivational phenomena. In addition, these principles are useful in generating new hypotheses for research on motivation. For example, we could use these principles to predict that, when violations of copyright law benefit the violator (e.g., a financially constraint student) a lot and hurt the original

owner (e.g., a leading publisher) a little, people would be more conformable to violate copyright laws within an in-group (than across out-groups), because of a perception of joint ownership that results from self–other overlap when using materials owned by in-group members.

A remaining question concerns the differences between pursuing goals with others versus alone. That is, do people respond differently to others' actions versus their own past and future actions when pursuing a goal in the present? Most of the research reviewed here focuses on similarities between working with others and working alone. For example, we argued that people choose actions to complement what others have or have done as much as they choose actions to complement what they themselves already have or have done. However, differences likely exist. For example, people might not satiate on others' food consumption in the same way that they satiate when they themselves eat the food. Indeed, in the studies we reported, participants satiated on others' consumption only when alternative food was presented, whereas people satiated on their own food consumption regardless of the alternatives. Future research may thus need to focus more closely on parallels as well as differences between coordination between people and coordination between past, present, and future selves.

Short Biographies

Ayelet Fishbach, a professor at the University of Chicago, studies social psychology, with specific emphasis on motivation and decision making. She has published in the major psychology and business journals. Her work on self-control and multiple goal pursuit received several international awards

Yanping Tu, Assistant Professor of Marketing at the University of Florida, studies the relationships and fuzzy boundaries between people, which influence choices, experiences and desires. Her work has been published in the major psychology and marketing journals.

Notes

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