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### **Goal Pursuit and Close Relationships: A People as Means Perspective**

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Consider a situation in which you travel to attend a friend's wedding. You purchase your tickets, pack your bags, travel to the airport, traverse the terminal, check into your hotel, iron your clothes, get ready, and ultimately arrive at the celebration. You may feel like you have accomplished a lot. Indeed, you have. You have engaged in forethought, exercised patience, navigated an unfamiliar environment, and even lifted some heavy bags. You can give yourself a pat on the back for all that you have accomplished. It may feel as if you have done all of this by yourself, on your own, and that you deserve the credit. On the other hand, you could not have made this trip without the help of your taxi driver, airplane pilot, hotel employees, and countless other people who assisted you along the way. Everything you do is carried out with the help of other people. When the assistance of others is recognized, those people should be appreciated. That is, people are likely to evaluate helpful others as interpersonally close, supportive, likable, and responsive.

The remainder of this chapter outlines how our goals influence how we come to evaluate the people in our lives. First, I detail the intimate alignment between goals and close relationships. Second, I present a people as means approach to understanding the link between goal pursuit and close relationships. This approach uses goal systems theory (Kruglanski et al., 2002) to make predictions about close relationships. By considering people as means to goals, each of the principles that describe means-goals relations can be applied to interpersonal perception and evaluation. Next, I explain who we turn to when we want help, when we turn to others rather than work alone, and why the presence of instrumental others is beneficial in our daily lives. Finally, I consider the way people sustain their relationships with others as a way of engaging in means maintenance.

#### **Goal Pursuit and Close Relationships**

Goal pursuit and close relationships are inextricably intertwined from life's earliest moments throughout adulthood. When a person is born, she emerges kicking and screaming and embarks on her first goal pursuit. She requires warmth and nutrition, yet is unable to regulate her own body temperature or feed herself. Instead, she must rely on caregivers to help her attain these goals. Through her crying and cooing, she is able to influence the behavior of others and get what she needs. As she grows through childhood, she starts to carry out some tasks independently. When she feels secure, she freely explores her environment, and when the world overwhelms her, she returns to the safety provided by her caregivers (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970). She is able to learn from a variety of people, including parents, teachers, coaches, and peers, who function as epistemic authorities (Kruglanski et al., 2005) and provide social support (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980). She engages in goal pursuit under close guidance from others and seeks their approval. As she moves into adolescence and adulthood, she begins to rely less on authority figures, and more on peers (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Kruglanski, Dechesne, Orehek, & Pierro, 2009). Entering adulthood, she may establish a close partnership with a spouse. Ultimately, she develops a sense that she can work independently, but also knows that she can turn to trusted others for counsel or

comfort (Kruglanski, Orehek, Dechesne, & Pierro, 2010). The intimate alignment between goal pursuit and close relationships makes it difficult to depict one without considering the other.

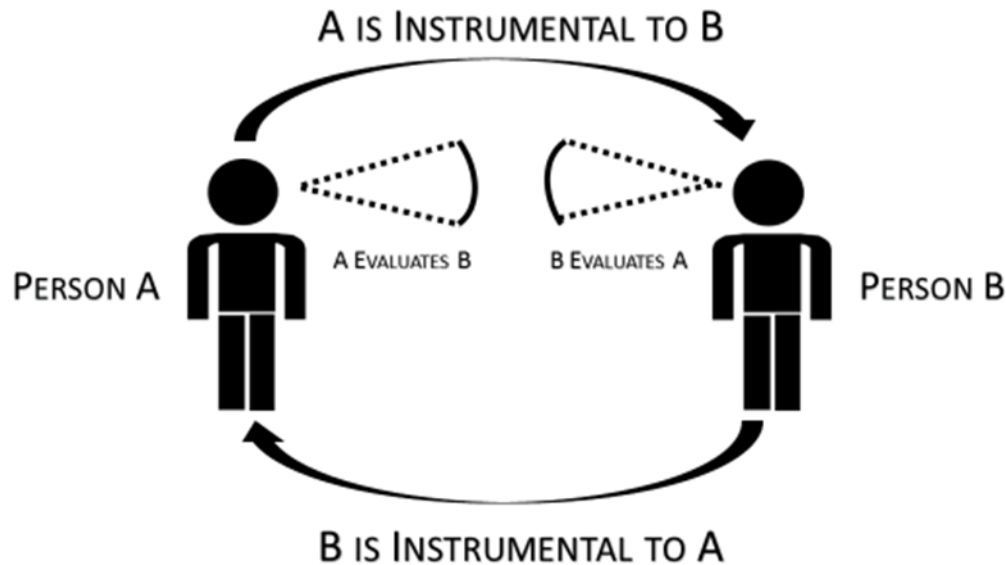
The present perspective investigates the intersection of goal pursuit and close relationships by outlining the implications of considering people as means to goals. When people facilitate goal pursuit, they serve as means to goals because they become an important part of the way one's goal pursuit is initiated, carried out, and attained (Orehek & Forest, 2016). To consider a person as a means to a goal is to recognize his or her usefulness (i.e., instrumentality) to one or more goals. When a person serves as a means to a goal, s/he is evaluated according to his or her instrumentality. People feel close to and spend time with others who they perceive as instrumental to their goals (Converse & Fishbach, 2012; Fitzsimons & Fishbach, 2010; Fitzsimons & Shah, 2008; Slotter & Gardner, 2011).

Even (or especially) infants rely on people as means to goals. Throughout the chapter, research will be reviewed showing that adults (or college students) evaluate others according to their perceived instrumentality. Yet, if the story starts at birth, then even infants should evaluate other according to their instrumentality. In one study, 6- and 10-month-old infants were presented with a story in which a character was attempting to climb a hill. A second character then either helped or hindered the first character's progress by either providing a boost or knocking the character down. After the presentation, infants preferred the helpful over the harmful character (Hamlin, Wynn, & Bloom, 2007), demonstrating that infants evaluate others according to their perceived instrumentality. The remainder of the chapter investigates the implications of evaluating other people according to their instrumentality (i.e., treating people as means to goals).

People use their social relationships to make individual goal pursuit possible. People take on a variety of roles, engage in a number of relationships, and adapt to changing norms; and they are typically able to do so relatively gracefully (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). For instance, initiation of goal pursuit leads people to bring to mind the people who enable goal progress (Fitzsimons & Shah, 2008) and the presence of helpful others leads people to bring to mind the goals they facilitate (Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003; Leander, Shah, & Chartrand, 2009; Shah, 2003; vanDellen & Hoyle, 2010). Every goal is supported by at least one other person, and every time a person initiates contact with someone else, she expects the other person to be instrumental to some goal pursuit (cf., Orehek & Forest, 2016).

### **People as Means to Goals**

Relationships should thrive when partners facilitate each other's goal pursuit. Specifically, we have proposed that relationship satisfaction should be highest when partners experience mutual perceived instrumentality, depicted in *Figure 1*. **Mutual perceived instrumentality** occurs when each person in a relationship perceives both themselves and the other person as instrumental to the other's goal pursuit (Orehek & Forest, 2016). The "people as means" framework uses insights gleaned from goal systems theory (Kruglanski et al., 2002; Kruglanski et al., 2015) to understand close relationship dynamics (Orehek & Forest, 2016).



To illustrate the mutual perceived instrumentality principle, consider a relationship between Milo and Stephanie. Milo evaluates Stephanie in terms of her instrumentality to his goals. He should evaluate her more positively if she is instrumental to goals he is pursuing at the moment, and should evaluate her more positively if she serves a larger rather than smaller set of goals. In addition, Milo wants to be instrumental to Stephanie's goals. He experiences increased self-worth when he feels useful in helping other people attain their goals. In addition, he feels best when Stephanie recognizes and appreciates his instrumentality and when her expectations of the ways in which he will be instrumental align with the ways he wants and is capable of being instrumental. Finally, relationship satisfaction will be maximized when Milo recognizes and appreciates Stephanie's instrumentality, and when she wants to be instrumental to the goals Milo would like her to support.

The foregoing example highlights the complexity of the mutual instrumentality principle. In the sections that follow, I review the research in support of each of the components of mutual perceived instrumentality. If these conditions are met, then treating people as means can be prosocial, warm, compassionate, and moral. When these conditions are violated, then the treatment of people as means can turn antisocial, cold, callous, and immoral. I return to this issue after reviewing the evidence in support of each component.

### **People Evaluate Others Based On Their Instrumentality**

The first proposition of the people as means framework postulates that people evaluate relationship partners according to their perceived instrumentality to their goals. If Stephanie is helpful toward Milo's goals, then he should draw closer to her, evaluate her positively, and experience positive affect in her presence. This prediction is derived from the transfer of affect principle in goal systems theory, which states that the properties of goals (e.g., commitment, positivity) transfer to the means of attainment proportionally to the strength of the means-goal connection (Fishbach et al., 2004; Kruglanski et al., 2002). Research has investigated this question in a variety of ways. Some of the earliest research to consider people as means to goals experimentally manipulated whether a goal was active versus inactive in a particular moment.

These studies revealed that active goals prompt individuals to bring to mind goal-instrumental others, to evaluate them positively, and to approach those individuals more readily (Fitzsimons & Shah, 2008). Consistent with these findings, research has found that people want to spend more time with potential new friends who are instrumental (vs. non-instrumental) to their current (academic achievement or fitness) goal (Slotter & Gardner, 2011). These studies provide initial support for the notion that people evaluate others based on their instrumentality to active goals.

Additional research has investigated important implications of this principle, and provide further support for the goal-dependent evaluations of relationship partners. One question that arises is whether people will evaluate others more positively prior to goal completion or following goal completion. On the one hand, it seems that a person who has been helpful toward the attainment of a goal should be evaluated positively because they have proven their instrumentality. On the other hand, once a goal has been attained, it should be deactivated (Bargh, 1990; Carver & Scheier, 1998; Kruglanski et al., 2002; Orehek, Bessarabova, Chen, & Kruglanski, 2009), and the person is no longer instrumental to an active goal. Thus, from the point-of-view of a goal pursuer, one would expect that evaluations of people should be more positive while they are helping a yet-unattained goal than after the help has been delivered and the goal has been accomplished (Fitzsimons, Friesen, Orehek, & Kruglanski, 2009).

Several studies have investigated the effects of goal progress and goal attainment on evaluations of instrumental others. In a series of studies, participants' sense of progress on their goals was manipulated, and researchers predicted that instrumental others would be more appreciated when goal progress was low rather than high. Confirming hypotheses, goal instrumental others were perceived as interpersonally closer when progress was low. When progress was high, participants rated instrumental and non-instrumental others as equally close (Fitzsimons & Fishbach, 2010). Thus, it seems that people appreciate and draw closer to people when they are instrumental to an active goal, but once sufficient progress has been made, they no longer appreciate the person's instrumentality. To investigate this effect further, researchers assessed participants' gratitude toward a person who was helpful for a task before or after the task's completion (Converse & Fishbach, 2012). Consistent with previous work, they once again found that instrumental others were appreciated more prior to goal completion than after. Thus, evaluations of people seem to track their usefulness. During times a person is instrumental, they are evaluated more positively than times in which they are not instrumental.

In each of these studies, a person was evaluated more positively while they were instrumental toward goal pursuit. Thus, appreciation for instrumental others is often fleeting. People evaluate others positively and appreciate their helpful acts while they are pursuing a goal, but appreciation wanes once the goal has been accomplished. An important challenge is to understand how to help people transform momentary experiences of appreciation into lasting relationship quality. To address this challenge, research on the way people may facilitate multiple goals may shed new light on how relationships are sustained over time.

Some authors have speculated about the consequences of having relationships in which partners serve many goals (Finkel, Hui, Carswell, & Larsen, 2014; Light & Fitzsimons, 2014). These authors focused on marriage and noted that marriage partners in modern times are more commonly expected to serve many goals than they were in previous generations, to the point that a marriage partner is expected to be one's primary support provider, closest confidante, activity partner, and best friend (Finkel et al., 2014). Because of this, modern marriages have the potential to be incredibly satisfying because they serve many of a person's needs. When means serve many goals, they accrue greater value (Chun et al., 2011; Orehek, Mauro, Kruglanski, & van der Bles,

2012; Kruglanski et al., 2013), thus marriage partners who serve more goals may be evaluated more positively than marriage partners who serve fewer goals (Light & Fitzsimons, 2014). To date, very little research has investigated whether there is a link between the number of goals partners serve and relationship evaluations. In my lab, we have conducted two studies in which participants reported on each of the people with whom they maintain regular contact. We found that relationship partners who serve more (vs. fewer) goals are evaluated as interpersonally closer, more supportive, and more responsive (Orehek, Forest, & Wingrove, 2017). More research is needed to investigate the implications of people as means to multiple goals.

Taken together, the research to date has demonstrated that people seem to be sensitive to the usefulness of their close relationship partners, and evaluate them according to their perceived instrumentality. However, more research is needed. Future research should explore the extent to which romantic relationships, friendships, and colleagues come to evaluate each other as interpersonally close, supportive, and whether having a partner who is instrumental fosters relationship satisfaction.

### **People Evaluate Themselves According to Their Own Instrumentality**

People often want and like to serve as means to other's goals. People develop their own sense of self-worth based on whether they are useful or helpful to other people, and whether people accept or reject them on those grounds (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). The present perspective and mutual perceived instrumentality principle suggest that serving as an instrumental means is just as important as having instrumental others. Being instrumental to others should increase both the felt closeness to the person for whom one has helped and increase one's own sense of self-worth. The former suggestion was offered by Ben Franklin, who stated "He that has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another, than he whom you yourself have obliged."

Supporting Ben Franklin's assertion, participants who performed a favor for someone with whom they previously had a negative or neutral impression came to like that person more (Jecker & Landy, 1969). Correlational research suggests that giving affection to a romantic partner is associated with commitment to the relationship (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). The tendency to provide support to members of one's social network is associated with higher self-efficacy, greater self-esteem, less depression, and less stress (Piferi & Lawler, 2006). In addition, experimental research has shown that giving support to others increases the felt social connection with that person (Inagaki & Eisenberger, 2012). Consistent with the present perspective, researchers have suggested that "the motivation for helping is essentially egoistic. That is, the primary motive for helping another person is that helping improves the helper's own situation" (Penner, Dovidio, & Albrecht, 2000, p. 64). Thus, serving as an instrumental means is important to people: they want to feel valuable, useful and helpful. Doing so allows them to feel close to their relationship partners and to feel valuable.

Consistent with the foregoing analysis, research has shown that people are sensitive to times in which they should serve as a means to others' goals. People want to serve the role of caregiver to close others (Hazan & Shaver, 2004). People in communal relationships feel decreased positive mood following failure to help their partner (Williamson, Clark, Pegalis, & Behan, 1996). In addition, newlyweds are likely to perform instrumental actions such as running errands for their partner when they feel inferior in the relationship (Murray et al., 2009). This sensitivity to opportunities to prove oneself useful highlights the value-creating aspect of giving support. When a partner serves as an instrumental means to her partner, she reaps benefits in the form of a self-worth and mood boost. Lacking or missing such opportunities, therefore, decreases mood and can lead to decreased self-esteem.

Thus, research supports the mutual perceived instrumentality principle. Research suggests that people benefit just as much (or more) from being instrumental to close others as having instrumental others. More research should investigate the consequences of perceiving oneself as instrumental to others and engaging in instrumental actions for the sake of others.

### **Importance of Personal Autonomy and Partner Recognition**

At this point, some astute readers may be struck by a sense of unease because treating people as means to goals can feel cold and callous. To suggest that people are evaluated positively only when they are useful, and to suggest that individual productivity depends on successful exploitation of one's social network can indeed conjure images of people who have been coerced or taken advantage of. And, of course, this can happen. When women are treated as sex objects while their minds are ignored or denied (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Nussbaum 1998), when people exchange sex for drugs (Kopetz, Collado, & Lejuez, 2015), or when people are coerced into becoming suicide terrorists (Orehek & Vazeou-Nieunwehuis, 2014), the use of people as means is cold, careless, and callous. However, consider cases in which a person helps his or her partner eat healthy meals, serves as a source of advice during a difficult time, celebrates after s/he receives a promotion at work, or holds his or her partner's hand while s/he receives chemotherapy. Each of these instances conjures an image of a warm, caring, and compassionate exchange in which both people benefit from the support provided. It is important to determine the critical ingredients of a mutually beneficial relationship.

The first two pieces of the mutual instrumentality puzzle have stated (1) people evaluate others according to their instrumentality, and (2) people want to be instrumental to other's goals because they evaluate themselves according to their own instrumentality. While the two pieces discussed above provide a starting point, they do not preclude instances in which a person would be taken advantage of. In order for a person to feel comfortable serving as a means to another's goals, and in order for that person to be treated justly, the person serving as a means must feel a sense of autonomy and recognition. Without them, the person is likely to feel taken advantage of, and disrespected. The missing ingredient in considering whether a person has been treated fairly, therefore, is a recognition of whether the person wants to serve a particular goal.

I suggest that two conditions must be met in order for an interpersonally warm interaction to occur. First, the person must feel as if they have freely chosen to serve as a means to a particular goal. Second, the person must be recognized for his or her contribution. While Milo may want to be instrumental toward some goals (perhaps he would like to be considered a great cook and good at managing finances), he may not want to be instrumental toward other goals (perhaps he does not want to plant a vegetable garden or to be handy at fixing things around the house). He is likely to experience discomfort if he is evaluated according to goals he is not attempting to serve, sometimes even if he is praised for his instrumentality in those domains. Consistent with this notion, research has found that support providers benefit when they experience the decision to help as autonomous, but not otherwise (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010).

The predictions derived from the present perspective regarding autonomy and recognition, while being supported by preliminary evidence (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010), await empirical validation. Future research should examine whether the experience of free choice in deciding whether to serve as a means and whether partner recognition for one's instrumentality are important for a person to experience the benefits of being instrumental. In addition, future research could explore the consequences of unwanted compliments from a people-as-means perspective. Such instances represent cases in which a person is praised for his or her instrumentality toward a goal for which the person did not wish to be instrumental, therefore representing a case in which

they are recognized as instrumental in a domain in which they did not choose to be instrumental. The present perspective suggests that a person in this situation would not appreciate the compliment because s/he did not want to be instrumental in that domain.

### **Who, When, and Why of People as Means**

While the foregoing sections detailed the implications of considering a person to be instrumental (or not), important questions regarding people as means remain. Evaluating someone positively does not necessarily mean that one will turn to that person for advice. Saying that someone is instrumental toward goal pursuit does not mean that they effectively rely on that person for help. A first question, therefore, concerns to whom people turn for help with their goals. A second question concerns when people turn to others for assistance. It is likely that some conditions foster a desire for self-reliance whereas others lead to support seeking. Finally, a third question concerns why people turn to others. In other words, do people benefit from turning to others, and if so, in what ways?

### **Who do People Turn to?**

When goal pursuit is initiated, people bring to mind means that have proven to be a reliable path toward obtaining the goal (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2000) and adopt the means that are both perceived to be instrumental and are available to the actor (Bargh, 1990; Kruglanski et al., 2002; Ouellette & Wood, 1998). Similarly, people should seek the help of others who are instrumental and available. Indeed, people bring to mind others who are perceived to be instrumental to goal pursuit (Fitzsimons & Shah, 2008). Recently, investigators tested the features of support providers that lead participants to turn to them for help. This research found that while both a person's previous effectiveness as a support provider and the frequency with which they typically interact with the person were positively associated with seeking support from the person, frequency of contact was a stronger predictor than effectiveness of support (Armstrong, Kammrath, Iida, & Suppes, 2017). In other words, participants seemed to prioritize a person's availability over their instrumentality when deciding to whom to turn. However, when participants indicated that the issue for which they wanted support was severe, effectiveness of previous support was a stronger predictor, suggesting that people are at least sometimes sensitive to the instrumentality of the person.

Another way of investigating this question is to examine the number of support providers to which people turn and how often they turn to each helper. Research has demonstrated that it is useful to have social networks composed of a diverse array of people who serve different types of goals (Cheung, Gardner, Anderson, 2015; Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2009). In that way, people can turn to different people for different issues, maximizing the skills of the people in their social networks. Such an approach suggests using a larger set of people to provide support, or what has been termed a breadth tactic. A breadth tactic is employed when a person turns to many people, while a depth tactic is employed when a person turns to the same person repeatedly (Armstrong & Kammrath, 2015). Armstrong and Kammrath found individual differences in the extent to which people enact each of these tactics. On average, people seem to turn to about 1-3 others for each specific issue they face, with women appearing more likely than men to use a diverse set of others as support providers (Armstrong & Kammrath, 2015; see also Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). While people benefit from having social networks composed of people with diverse skillsets, and turning to a large number of people for assistance, it appears that many people under-utilize people as means to goals.

People should receive the best help if they turn to others who are the most instrumental for the goal they are pursuing in the moment (i.e., who have proven to be effective support providers).

Importantly, the instrumentality of a person is a matter of personal preference. Research has consistently demonstrated that people have unique preferences when it comes to their perception of who would make the best support provider (Lakey & Orehek, 2011; Neely et al., 2006), the best mate (Eastwick & Hunt, 2014), the best teacher (Gross, Lakey, Orehek, & Edinger, 2009), and the best therapist (Lakey, Cohen, & Neely, 2008). In addition, people seem to be able to forecast who they will find instrumental after brief exposure to the person. For example, people can forecast who they will find uniquely supportive after a single short conversation (Veenstra et al., 2011). Similarly, students are able to forecast how effective they will find a teacher after watching a short video of the instructor teaching (Gross et al., 2015). Thus, people could improve the quality of help they receive during goal pursuit by spending more time with instrumental others, and seem to be able to determine who is most instrumental. While people seem to turn to others who are available to them, they also appear to have the tools necessary to make accurate forecasts about who they will find instrumental. Thus, increasing the prioritization of instrumentality over availability could help people be happier, healthier, and more productive. It does seem that people may naturally do this when the issue they are facing is severe (i.e., when the goal is important).

### **When do People Turn to Others?**

Setting out alone and working closely with others each have their advantages and disadvantages. When people think of themselves as independent, they take full responsibility for successes and failures. In times of success, it means they can take full credit for positive outcomes. However, it also means that in times of failure, they must take full responsibility for negative outcomes. Working interdependently with others can feel empowering. It creates and bolsters one's sense of self-worth and personal significance (Kruglanski et al., 2013; Kruglanski, Chen, Dechesne, Fishman, & Orehek, 2009; Kruglanski & Orehek, 2011). The empowering nature of social interdependence fosters the willingness to serve as a means by sacrificing for the sake of others (Orehek, Sasota, Kruglanski, Dechesne, & Ridgeway, 2014). Given these advantages and disadvantages, when do people prefer to work interdependently, and when do they prefer to work independently?

We predicted that experiences of failure would prompt individuals to shift toward a preference for interdependence over independence. To investigate this possibility, we carried out a series of experiments in which we manipulated participants' experiences of success versus failure and measured the relative value they placed on interdependence versus independence (Orehek, Vazeou-Neiuwenhuis, & Kruglanski, 2017). In our first experiment, participants engaged in a videogame task said to predict their future life success. The task was rigged such that half the participants would fail and the other half would succeed. Participants in the failure condition reported greater value placed on interdependence. In our second experiment, participants once again were prompted to succeed or fail. This time, they took an exam said to measure their verbal and quantitative abilities. Bogus feedback informed participants that they either scored in the top 90 percent of test-takers (success condition) or in the bottom 15 percent (failure condition). Once again, participants in the failure condition reported stronger valuation of social interdependence. In a third study, participants recalled either a time in which they failed at an important personal goal (failure condition) or a time in which they watched television (control condition). This study confirmed that feelings of failure prompted participants to increase the value placed on interdependence with others.

### **Why do People turn to Others?**

People have many goals and must allocate their time, energy and attention in such a way as to maximize their outcomes (Orehek & Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis, 2013). Yet, however clever one



is in allocating one's personal resources, the total pool is fixed. This limitation may be circumvented by working with other people, and having them serve as means to goals, in order to expand the total possible effort. In this way, some of the work can be "outsourced" to other people (Fitzsimons & Finkel, 2011; 2012). To investigate the advantages of using other people as means, research has tested whether having instrumental others increases the likelihood of goal pursuit success.

Research consistently demonstrates that having strong relationships with close partners contributes to successful goal pursuit (Fitzsimons & Finkel, 2010). Close others can serve as a secure base from which to explore one's environment when they support goal progress (Feeney, 2004; Feeney & Thrush, 2010). This support is important. Previous research has found that having social networks composed of supportive others increases the likelihood that people are successful. For example, people who experience relationship satisfaction are more likely to be successful in their goal pursuits (Hofmann, Finkel, & Fitzsimons, 2015). People who have relationships with goal-instrumental others are more likely to accomplish the goal for which they have support (Fitzsimons & Shah, 2008). People are more successful in their goal pursuits if they have social networks composed of individuals who are effective self-regulators (vanDellen et al., 2015). This is likely because people who are effective self-regulators are better equipped to provide assistance (i.e., are more instrumental). Thus, establishing a social network of people who support goal pursuit is important for the attainment of one's goals.

The people as means framework also applies to cases in which people serve emotion regulation goals. In addition to helping a person be productive, others can help a person feel good. For example, research has found that having a social network composed of people who meet specific emotion regulation needs is associated with well-being (Cheung et al., 2015). The well-known link between perceived support and experience of positive affect (Lakey & Orehek, 2011) may potentially be explained by the perceived instrumentality of the relationship partner. To rate a person as supportive may be equivalent to perceiving that person as instrumental to one's goals. Consistent with the suggestion, people experience positive affect when engaged in instrumental activities or when with instrumental people (Fishbach, Shah, & Kruglanski, 2004). Recent research in my lab has found a link between the number of goals a person serves and the perceived supportiveness of that person (Orehek, Forest, & Wingrove, 2017). More research is needed to investigate whether social support processes may be explained according to a people as means framework.

### **Relationship Maintenance as a Goal**

Once a person is committed to a means, maintaining the means can become a subgoal in its own right. For example, a person who purchases a car as a means of transportation must fill it with gasoline, get regular oil changes, keep it clean, and repair any damage. In order for it to continue to be instrumental, it must be kept in good working order. So it goes when people serve as means. When a person commits to a relationship partner, s/he must care for the relationship and maintain interpersonal closeness with the other person. The people as means approach makes apparent two ways of doing this. First, the person can increase their own standing in their partner's eyes, thereby highlighting their instrumentality to their partner. This should lead the partner to draw closer. Second, the person can increase the partner's standing in their own eyes, thereby recognizing the instrumentality of their partner. This should lead them to move closer to the partner. The next two sections consider each of these possibilities.

### **Increasing Self-Standing in a Partner's Eyes**

To maintain closeness to an established relationship partner, people can attempt to increase their perceived instrumentality in that person's eyes. For example, research has found that times in which a person perceives a potential instrumentality imbalance (e.g., "My partner does more for me than I do for him/her") prompt romantic partners to appear useful by performing tasks for their partner, such as taking care of a chore that is typically the partner's responsibility (Murray, Aloni, Holmes, Derrick, Stonson, & Leder, 2009; see also Overall, Fletcher, & Simpson, 2006). In order to remain important to a partner, people want to feel as if they are valuable, and even irreplaceable (Murray, Leder, MacGregor, Holmes, Pinkus, & Harris, 2009). One way of creating the sense that one is irreplaceable is to serve as the exclusive means to particular goals. In monogamous romantic relationships, partners serve as exclusive means to sex. A friend may be the only person who shares a secret. A parent may be the only person who can bask in the nostalgic glow of one's childhood memories. By remaining the exclusive (or best) means to a goal, the person maintains a privileged position in their partner's life. The desire to be irreplaceable may contribute to the desire to be evaluated as uniquely positive by one's romantic partner (Eastwick, Finkel, Mochon, & Ariely, 2007). In other words, people want to feel not just as if their partner evaluates them positively, but that their partner evaluates them more positively than they evaluate other people, and more positively than other people evaluate the self (termed a relationship effect, Eastwick & Hunt, 2014; Lakey & Orehek, 2011).

A second way to be irreplaceable is to serve multiple goals in such a way that is unlikely to be duplicated by another person. A person who serves multiple goals is said to be multifinal (Kruglanski et al., 2013; Light & Fitzsimons, 2014). People may benefit in two ways by being multifinal. First, multifinal people should be evaluated more positively because they are able to satisfy more goals (Chun et al., 2011; Orehek et al., 2012; Orehek et al., 2017). Second, the multifinality constraint effect demonstrates that the more goals that are involved, the smaller is the set of means that potentially serve the set of goals is smaller (Kopetz et al., 2011). Finding a food that is tasty is relatively easy. Finding a food that is tasty, healthy, convenient, and cheap is quite difficult. So it is with people. Finding a person who will play tennis with you may be relatively easy. Finding a person who will play tennis, bake brownies, watch avant-garde French films, make a good co-parent, is sexually appealing, and is also good with finances is another matter. Thus, a multifinal person is less likely to have an equivalent than someone who serves a smaller set of goals.

Thus, one would like to be uniquely useful in their partner's eyes, and can accomplish this by being the exclusive means to particular goals or by satisfying a large set of goals. Very little research has examined the implications of these insights. Much more research is needed on how people feel when instrumental to their partner in these various ways. More generally, much more research is needed on how people attempt to be instrumental to their partners.

### **Increasing a Partner's Standing in One's Own Eyes**

Even if Milo is convinced that he is appreciated by Stephanie, he must maintain his own positive evaluation of Stephanie. This can lead to motivated processing of information about the partner and alternative partners in such a way that enhances one's evaluation of the relationship (Bélanger, Kruglanski, Chen, & Orehek, 2014; Bélanger, Kruglanski, Chen, Orehek, & Johnson, 2015). For example, people enhance their partner's positive attributes and minimize their partner's negative traits (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000; Murray & Holmes, 1999). Such motivated reasoning may have some benefits. Idealizing partners may contribute to greater relationship satisfaction. Interestingly, research has found that partner idealization has positive effects on relationship satisfaction by increasing mutual perceived instrumentality. When one partner

idealizes the other (perceiving him or her as more instrumental), it can lead to the partner then seeing him- or herself as more instrumental, and ultimately leading the person to confirm these expectations and become more instrumental (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). Thus, the idealization process increased (a) the partner's standing in one's own eyes, leading (b) the other partner to increase their own standing in their own eyes, leading to (c) behaviors that confirmed the original idealization. At the end of the day, relationship satisfaction can be higher when this process is instigated (Murray et al., 1996).

In addition, facilitating recognition of the ways a partner is instrumental should increase felt satisfaction in a relationship. It may be easy to forget all the ways a partner is helpful, especially if the goals are generally satisfied. Once a couple has successfully purchased a home, car, and navigated daily life, the comfort of that life may ironically lead to a reduction in the recognition of the other person's instrumentality. If people are aware of the ongoing nature of the relationship with the helper and the many goals the relationship partner serves, then they should be less apt to experience this reduction in appreciation following goal progress, and more likely to express the appreciation they feel. Thus, it is likely that people who are made aware of the multiplicity of goals the relationship partner serves will be more likely to exhibit enduring appreciation for their partner. This possibility could be explored in future research.

People in monogamous romantic relationships face the challenge of encountering attractive alternative partners and the expectation that they do not initiate romantic relationships with those individuals. While one may be free to have several close friends, activity partners, and so on, the expectations of monogamous relationships mean that the person is motivated to maintain the relationship by viewing alternatives as less desirable than one's current partner. A similar situation arises when people are pursuing one goal, and are reminded of an alternative goal or are faced with a temptation. Goal shielding occurs when focal goal commitment is high, such that people disengage from and devalue alternative goals (Shah, Friedman, & Kruglanski, 2002). When committed to a goal, people also inhibit and avoid temptations that may undermine goal pursuit (Fishbach, Friedman, & Kruglanski, 2003; Fishbach & Shah, 2006). Applying these principles to romantic relationships, people should direct their attention away from and devalue alternative romantic partners when they are committed to their current partner. Thus, the large body of research on alternative partner derogation represents a case of goal shielding.

Research has investigated whether people engage in relationship maintenance by devaluing and directing attention away from alternative partners, and whether they are more likely to do so when they are highly committed to their current partner. The findings consistently show a relationship shielding effect. People in a romantic relationship rate photographs of opposite sex individuals as less attractive than do single people (Karremans, Dotsch, & Corneille, 2011; Simpson, Gangestad, & Lerma, 1990). Once in a romantic relationship, individuals who report strong commitment to their current partner rate alternative romantic partners as less attractive than do those who are weakly committed to their current partner (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Lydon, Fitzsimons, & Naidoo, 2003; see also, Meyer, Berkman, Karremans, & Lieberman, 2011). Participants highly (vs. lowly) committed to their current partner also attend less to attractive alternatives (Linardatos & Lydon, 2011; Maner, Gailliot, & Miller, 2009). Thus, people seem to shield their relationships from potential threats.

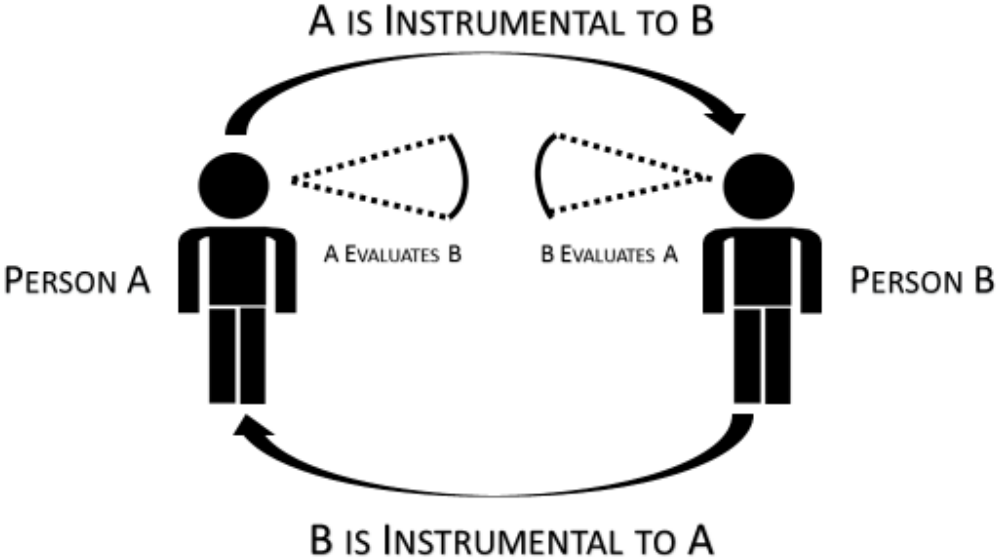
### **Conclusion**

When attempting to understand what people think, feel, and do, we must understand what people want (Kruglanski, Chernikova, Rosenzweig, & Kopetz, 2014) and how they go about getting it (Kruglanski et al., 2002). Almost everything people do is driven by their personal goals

(Kruglanski, 1996; Kruglanski & Orehek, 2009). People want, and need, to have lasting and deep social connections with other people. Satisfaction of the need to form social relationships characterized by lasting commitment is critical for human functioning and flourishing, and therefore represents a goal that deserves special consideration (Bowlby, 1969; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Feeney & Collins, 2015; Lakey & Orehek, 2011). Just as a person becomes committed to any other means of goal attainment, people become committed to specific relationship partners who have proven themselves to be instrumental (Rusbult, Agnew, & Arriaga, 2012). When commitment to a relationship partner is strong, relationship maintenance becomes a goal. When a person establishes a close bond with another person and relies on him or her to help pursue goals, s/he must keep in touch with the person, be responsive to his or her needs, and otherwise maintain the relationship. Thus, an important aspect of a “people as means” approach is the active process of means maintenance.

The people as means notion was developed originally to understand the way in which perceiving others as instrumental influences evaluations of the relationship with that person (Orehek & Forest, 2016). But, what role do close relationships have in moving individual goal pursuit forward? Close relationships can serve as both a catalyst and a constraint to individual ambitions. While the term catalyst typically has a positive connotation and constraint a negative connotation, each function can be beneficial or harmful, depending on the goals of the person. When a partner serves as a catalyst to individual goal pursuit, she makes it more likely that the person will attain a goal. For example, when a friend applauds your marathon training, she supports you in the endeavor and provides a morale boost that facilitates increased effort investment in the goal. However, a person can also serve as a catalyst to self-defeating behaviors. Engaging in behaviors that may typically be viewed as unwise, such as drug abuse (Kopetz, Lejuez, Wiers, & Kruglanski, 2013), prostitution (Kopetz, Collado, & Lejuez, 2015), over-eating (Orehek & Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis, 2016), joining a terrorist organization (Orehek & Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis, 2014), or martyrdom (Orehek et al., 2014) represent instances of goal pursuit (Kopetz & Orehek, 2015) in which a person who serves as an instrumental means to these goal may be considered a catalyst to risky behavior.

Social relationships also serve as a constraint when partners establish norms and set expectations. A person constrains goal pursuit when they hinder progress on that goal. When person interferes with healthy or productive pursuit, this constraint is detrimental to positive life outcomes. Importantly, relationships can often constrain an individual in a way that prevents them from engaging in self-defeating behaviors. When one’s social network members constrain behavior by communicating that drug abuse, unhealthy actions, self-harm, and violence are unacceptable, it prevents the person from engaging in such activities. Thus, in order for people to engage in self-defeating behaviors, they must establish relationships with people who support such practices and be willing to suffer strife in relationships that do not support such behaviors (Kopetz & Orehek, 2015). Thus, the constraining function of relationships is just as important as the catalytic function.



*Figure 1.* Depiction of Mutual Perceived Instrumentality in a Dyad

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