

Running head: POWER AND PARTNER GOALS

Power and the Pursuit of a Partner's Goals

Kristin Laurin^a

Gráinne M. Fitzsimons^b

Eli J. Finkel^c

Kathleen L. Carswell^c

Michelle R. vanDellen^d

Wilhelm Hofmann^e

Nathaniel M. Lambert^f

Paul W. Eastwick^g

Frank D. Fincham^h

Preston C. Brown^h

^a Stanford Graduate School of Business

^b Duke University

^c Northwestern University

^d University of Georgia

^e University of Cologne

^f University of the South Pacific

^g University of Texas at Austin

^h Florida State University

Abstract

We investigated how power dynamics in close relationships influence the tendency to devote resources to the pursuit of goals valued by relationship partners, hypothesizing that low (vs. high) power in relationships would lead individuals to center their individual goal pursuit around the goals of their partners. We study two related phenomena: *partner goal prioritization*, whereby individuals pursue goals on behalf of their partners, and *partner goal contagion*, whereby individuals identify and adopt as their own the goals that their partner pursues. We tested our ideas in five studies that employed diverse research methods, including lab experiments and dyadic studies of romantic partners, and multiple types of dependent measures, including experience sampling reports, self-reported goal commitment, and behavioral goal pursuit in a variety of goal domains. Despite this methodological diversity, the studies provided clear and consistent evidence that individuals with low power in their relationships are especially likely to engage in both partner goal prioritization and partner goal contagion.

Key words: Close relationships; social support; goal contagion; power; self-regulation; transactive goal dynamics

Power and the Pursuit of a Partner's Goals

People pursue many goals each day. They might study to pass an exam, donate money to charity to help others, call a friend on her birthday to strengthen their relationship, or decline dessert after dinner to stay healthy. Because people's time and energy are limited, though, few people are able to pursue all the goals that they value. Ultimately, people have to prioritize some goals over others (Fishbach, 2009; Kruglanski et al., 2002). In any given day, people have to decide among important goal pursuits: Do they call their mom to support her through a difficult time, or do they catch up on bills? Do they squeeze in an exercise session with their spouse after dinner or help their son with his homework? Do they stay in their office to finish a paper or walk across campus to attend an interesting lecture? In this research, we investigate interpersonal processes that influence how people navigate these decisions. Specifically, we test the hypothesis that individuals with low power in a given relationship are especially likely to prioritize and catch goals valued by their partner in that relationship.

Take David and Danielle, who are starting a new romantic relationship. Maintaining her health is very important to Danielle: She exercises daily and is careful to eat nutritious meals and snacks. David, though, is an amateur gastronome. He cares about his health, of course, but it isn't his priority right now. He loves to watch cooking shows to hone his skills, and his diet is full of the kinds of fattening (but delicious) foods that Danielle exerts herself to avoid. Assuming David and Danielle stay together, how will their emerging interdependence shape their respective goal pursuits? David has only so many hours in his day, and only so much energy to devote to goal-directed activities. Will he orient this energy around his own gastronomic goals, or around Danielle's health goals? In other words, will David stick to his high-calorie meals and sedentary lifestyle? Or will he begin cooking leaner, healthier meals when they eat together, helping Danielle, and thus prioritizing Danielle's goal for health over his goal for enjoyment? And when

he eats alone, might he try to eat more vegetables, reinvigorating his own dormant health goals to match hers, at the expense of his culinary progress?

We propose that one answer to these questions is rooted in the relationship's power dynamics. If David has low (vs. high) power in the relationship, we suggest that his goal-directed behavior will more often center around Danielle's goals, leading him to devote more of his resources of time and energy to the pursuit of goals that Danielle values, like healthy eating and exercising. More specifically, we suggest that this tendency produces two distinct observable consequences for David's goal pursuit. First, in our *partner goal prioritization* hypothesis, we suggest that individuals with low power in a relationship will be likelier to prioritize their partner's goal pursuits, aiming to help their partners achieve their goals. Second, in our *partner goal contagion* hypothesis, we suggest that individuals with low power in a relationship will also be likelier to catch their partners' goal pursuits, taking on their partners' goals and pursuing them for themselves.

Because his time and energy are limited, we suggest that both partner goal prioritization and contagion will tend to come at the expense of David's pursuit of his own goals. The time he spends accommodating Danielle's workout schedule by doing her share of the chores is time he could have spent attending a webinar on cream-based soups. The time he spends cooking brown rice and boiled kale for himself is time he could have spent working on his knife skills or practicing the elusive art of soufflé-making. Of course, he may still try to do those things—indeed, people often pursue more than one goal at a time. But if he adds in Danielle's goals, whether by pursuing them for her (prioritizing them) or for himself (catching them), he will tend to have less time and energy and fewer opportunities to pursue his own independent goals. In short, we hypothesize that individuals with low power in a relationship will be likelier, when faced with

decisions about how to deploy their self-regulatory resources, to use them to pursue goals that their partner holds, rather than working towards the goals they value independently of the partner.

Interpersonal Influences on Goal Pursuit

In everyday life, when people set and pursue goals, they do so not as completely independent individuals, but in the context of numerous close relationships and other social bonds (Fitzsimons, Finkel, & vanDellen, 2015). Indeed, goal pursuit is frequently shaped by relationships with others and the goals that others value (e.g., Aarts, Gollwitzer, & Hassin, 2004; Cavallo, Fitzsimons, & Holmes, 2009; Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003; Shah, 2003; Shteynberg & Galinsky, 2011; Walton & Cohen, 2011). For example, students put more effort and time into their goals to achieve academically, persisting longer and performing better on academic tests, when they were reminded of close others who valued their academic achievement goals (Shah, 2003). Similarly, overweight participants in a community health program lost more weight when their teammates possessed similar weight loss goals (Leahey, Kumar, Weinberg, & Wing, 2012). Thus, individual goal pursuit is often shaped by social and interpersonal processes (Fitzsimons et al., 2015). The processes we explore in the current research—partner goal prioritization and partner goal contagion—are two such processes through which close partners can shape each other's goal pursuit.

Partner goal prioritization. Past research has demonstrated the existence of both of these interpersonal goal processes. Regarding partner goal prioritization, a vast literature has demonstrated that people devote time and energy to help advance their partner's goals. For example, romantic partners offer instrumental and emotional support for their partner's goals (Brunstein, Dangelmayer, & Schultheiss, 1996; Girme, Overall, & Simpson, 2013; Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990) and behave in ways that promote their partner's ability to achieve important goals (Drigotas, Rusbult, Wieselquist, & Whitton, 1999). Such tendencies to offer

resources to advance other people's goals seem to be common, and even exist in young children: Toddlers as young as 14 months exert effort to help other people achieve their goals (Liszkowski, Carpenter, & Tomasello, 2008; Warneken & Tomasello, 2007). This research suggests that in many instances, David will prioritize Danielle's goals, and spend his limited resources helping her achieve them.

Partner goal contagion. Regarding partner goal contagion, a smaller literature has provided support for the idea that people devote resources to the pursuit of goals triggered by others' goal states. For instance, people can be inspired to pursue goals by similar others who act as role models (Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002). In social cognition research, participants have been shown to "catch" and pursue the goals implied by the behaviors of others in the social environment (Aarts et al., 2004; Dik & Aarts, 2007; Loersch, Aarts, Payne, & Jefferis, 2008; Walton, Cohen, Cwir, & Spencer, 2012). For example, when participants in one study read about a target whose behaviors implied he was interested in earning money, they persevered longer on a money-making task, suggesting they had temporarily taken on his goal and were pursuing it through their own actions (Aarts et al., 2004). This research suggests that in many instances, David will catch Danielle's goals, and expend some of his limited resources trying to achieve them for himself.¹

Power and Interpersonal Influences on Goal Pursuit

Although the majority of psychological research on power, defined as asymmetric control over valued resources (French & Raven, 1959; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), focuses on organizational or broader social contexts (e.g., Caza, Tiedens, & Lee, 2011; Galinsky et al., 2013; Hershcovis, Reich, Parker, & Bozeman, 2012; Lammers, Dubois, Rucker, & Galinsky, 2013; Rucker, Galinsky, & Dubois, 2012), power also plays a central role in close relationships. Because of strong everyday interdependence, close relationship partners have the opportunity to influence

each other's important outcomes in many ways (Simpson, Farrell, Orina, & Rothman, 2014). Indeed, research has demonstrated the consequences of power within close relationships for important relationship phenomena, including conflict, satisfaction, and risky sexual behavior (e.g., Anderson, Keltner, & John, 2003; Felmlee, 1994; Inesi, Gruenfeld, & Galinsky, 2012; Peplau, 1979; Righetti et al., 2015; Rogers, Bidwell, & Wilson, 2005; Vanderdrift, Agnew, Harvey, & Warren, 2013).

Of particular relevance to our partner goal prioritization hypothesis, Righetti and colleagues (2015) found that lower power relationship partners report a greater willingness to make sacrifices for their partners. They tend to endorse statements like "I am willing to make sacrifices for the well-being of my relationship." In a diary study, participants who felt lower in power tended to recall making more sacrifices in their romantic relationship in everyday life. These findings provide evidence that power does shape people's willingness to report sacrificing themselves for their partner's benefit. One way in which they may do so, we suggest, is by pursuing their partner's goals, devoting to those goals resources they could have spent pursuing their own goals.

Of particular relevance to our partner goal contagion hypothesis, Anderson and colleagues (2003) found that lower power relationship partners tend to match their partners' emotional responses over time (cf. Hsee, Hatfield, Carlson, & Chemtob, 1990). In one study, the researchers followed romantic partners over a seven-month period, and found that emotional congruence increased over time, with partners reporting increasingly similar levels of positive and negative emotions. This increased emotional congruence emerged because the lower power partner in the relationship moved towards the emotional experience of the higher power partner. In another study, pairs of roommates who had been living together for two weeks showed no convergence in their emotional responses to standardized sets of lab-induced experiences; however, after having

lived together for nine months, these same pairs responded much more similarly. Once again, the increased congruence occurred specifically because lower power roommates changed their responses to match those of higher power roommates. These findings demonstrated that power affects the receptivity of partners to each other's mental states, and in important ways, they form the foundation for the current hypothesis about partner goal contagion, which explores related ideas in the domain of goals. Just as low power partners catch their partner's emotions, we suggest that they may also "catch" and ultimately pursue their partner's goals. Thus, in sum, the current research extends the study of power in close relationships to explore consequences for individual goal pursuit.

Power and Partner Goal Prioritization and Contagion

Specifically, we hypothesize that low power individuals in relationships are especially likely to center their individual goal pursuit around their partner's goals. That is, we suggest that individuals with low power in their relationships are more likely than those with high power to *prioritize* their partner's goals, devoting time and energy to pursuing those goals as their partner pursues them, and that they are also more likely to *catch* their partner's goals, devoting time and energy to pursuing those goals with their own self substituted for the partner's. Note that in both cases, these low power individuals are devoting time and energy that they otherwise could have devoted to pursuing goals they hold independently of their partners, meaning that in both cases, there are likely costs to their independent goal pursuit. Overall, we suggest that a partner's goals are more central determinants of the goal pursuit of low power, versus high power, partners. We derived these predictions from two converging theoretical rationales, suggesting that those low in power are (1) higher in motivation to please the partner, and (2) lower in focus on their own goals.

Power and relationship motivation. One route through which relationship power may affect partner goal prioritization and contagion is via individuals' motivation to maintain positive

relationships with their partners. Low power individuals, by definition, depend on their partners for valuable resources, both tangible (e.g., money, decision-making power) and less tangible (e.g., affection, love, support). A vast literature in the organizational domain documents low power individuals' attempts to please those in power, to ensure continued access to the resources they control (e.g., Brass & Burkhardt, 1993; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980, see also Gordon, 1996). This tendency likely exists within close relationships as well: Individuals who are less powerful—and therefore more dependent on their partners—may have greater concerns about losing the relationship along with its associated perks (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), and may therefore continually seek to please their partner.

This desire to seek closeness or to maintain positive relationships with others may explain why low power individuals tend to adopt others' perspectives more readily (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006), are more responsive to others' behavior, even at a neurological level (Hogeveen, Inzlicht, & Obhi, 2014), are more receptive to others' opinions and values (Briñol, Petty, Valle, Rucker, & Becerra, 2007; Eaton, Visser, Krosnick, & Anand, 2009), and more likely to attend to others' idiosyncrasies (Fiske, 1993; Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinsky, 2008). Such tendencies would indeed help low power individuals to know which of their actions would produce the most positive reactions in their partners. To summarize, theory suggests and empirical evidence supports the idea that low power individuals are more motivated to ingratiate themselves with their partners. We speculate that this motivation could lead them to center their own goal-directed behavior around their partners' goals to a greater extent, by both prioritizing and catching the partners' goals, as a means to maintaining a positive relationship with the partner.

Relationship motivation and partner goal prioritization. If low power individuals in relationships are higher in motivation to please their partners, this may lead them to help their partners by contributing effort and time towards their partners' ongoing goals, as a means of

enhancing the partner's happiness and ultimately maintaining the relationship. Existing research suggests that people who want to please their partners are likelier to help those partners with their goal pursuits. Relationship insecurities (Murray, Aloni, Holmes, Derrick, & Stinson, 2009), relationship commitment (e.g., Rusbult, Olsen, Davis, & Hannon, 2001), intimacy and relationship satisfaction (Dunkel-Schetter & Skokan, 1990; Hobfoll & Lerman, 1989), and fear of punishment by partners (Van Lange, Klapwijk, & Van Munster, 2011), all lead people to assist partners with their goals. For example, when participants felt insecure about their partner's regard, they were likelier to report behaviors that directly help a partner with his/her goals, such as looking for lost keys and packing lunches for the partner (Murray et al., 2009). Thus, a desire to please the partner likely results in greater partner goal prioritization. Given that the experience of low power in a relationship can make people want to please their partners, it may also result in greater partner goal prioritization via this mechanism.

Relationship motivation and partner goal contagion. If low power individuals are higher in motivation to please the partner, this motivation may also lead them to catch their partner's goals. Many scholars have theorized that social contagion processes serve to make relationships smoother (e.g., Ireland et al., 2011; Lakin & Chartrand, 2003; Loersch et al., 2008; Sinclair et al., 2005; Tomasello, Carpenter, Call, Behne, & Moll, 2005; Walton et al., 2012). Lending empirical support to this claim, Anderson and colleagues (2003) found that when romantic partners' emotions converged over time, they were more satisfied and less likely to break up. In the context of goal contagion in particular, a recent set of studies shows that goal contagion occurs more strongly among individuals who feel gratitude (Jia, Tong, & Lee, 2014). Although that effect may have multiple causes, it is possible that it reflects some desire on the part of the grateful individuals to make their interaction partners happy. Similarly, research has shown that goal contagion is higher among participants who share a group identity, again pointing to social

motivations as enhancers of goal contagion (Loersch et al., 2008). Thus, a desire to please the partner may result in greater partner goal contagion. Given that the experience of low power in a relationship can make people want to please their partner, it may also result in greater goal contagion via this mechanism.

Power and self-regulation. Another route through which relationship power might affect partner goal prioritization and contagion is via self-regulation. A large body of research suggests that low power individuals may have weaker individual-level goal pursuit, compared to high power individuals: They tend to be less focused on their goals and more vulnerable to situational distractions, compared to those with high power (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008; Guinote, 2007). Their goals are less readily accessible (Slabu & Guinote, 2007), they have difficulty planning their goal pursuits (Smith, Jostmann, Galinsky, & van Dijk, 2008), they have weaker approach motivation (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Galinsky et al., 2003), and they struggle to exert self-control (DeWall, Baumeister, Mead, & Vohs, 2011). Finally, they find themselves less inspirational than high power individuals do (van Kleef, Oveis, Homan, van der Löwe, & Keltner, 2015), and are less swayed by their perceptions of their own internal states (Jouffre, 2015).

In other words, individuals with low power in their relationships may be relatively unfocused when it comes to goal pursuit, at least when their relationship and thus their low power is salient. If they are unfocused on their own internal goal states—on their sense of what goal is driving their behavior, and on how much they value their desired end-state—then they may be much likelier to be affected by their current social environment, which includes, very prominently, their relationship partners. Indeed, past research has shown that people with low self-regulatory resources fall prey to social influence to a greater extent than those with high self-regulatory resources (Janssen, Fennis, Pruyn, & Vohs, 2008; Wheeler, Briñol, & Herman, 2007). Given that

the partner's goals are one very prominent potential source of social influence for people in close relationships, people with weaker focus on their own goals may thus be more vulnerable to influence from those goals. If the partner's behavior conveys that a certain goal is important or desirable, low power individuals are likelier to attend to that information, and it is thus likelier that their individual goal pursuit will reflect their partner's goals, either through partner goal prioritization or through partner goal contagion. In sum, if low power individuals are relatively less focused on their own goals, at least in the presence of the partners with whom they experience low power, they may be likelier to center their own goal-directed behavior around these partners' goals to a greater extent than high power individuals, by both prioritizing and catching their goals.

Self-regulation and partner goal prioritization. If low power individuals are weaker individual goal pursuers, not as strongly focused on their own goals as high power individuals, they may be more likely to prioritize the goals of other people in their decisions about where to invest time and energy. If David is not strongly focused on his internal states—his own culinary goals—it stands to reason that he may be more open to putting those goals aside and more willing to make sacrifices of those goals (Righetti et al., 2015). In other words, if David is not strongly focused on his goals, at least when he is thinking about Danielle, with whom he experiences low power, he may feel less conflicted about putting those goals aside to help her. His own weak goal focus may thus be what drives him to orient his goal pursuit towards Danielle's health goals, helping her to achieve them. Thus, weak goal focus should promote partner goal prioritization. Given that low power in a relationship likely weakens goal focus in the context of that relationship, it may result in greater goal prioritization via this mechanism.

Self-regulation and partner goal contagion. Similarly, if low power leads individuals to be weaker goal pursuers, this weaker focus on their own internal goals as drivers of behavior may also lead these individuals to catch the goals of other people in the social environment. We know

that low power people are more likely to integrate situational cues into their behavior—for instance, one study asked participants to draw an alien from a different planet, and found that low power participants were far more likely than high power participants to use features from an example drawing in their own work; that is, they were more influenced by the environment (Galinsky et al., 2008). This same principle of situational influence may well apply to goal pursuit: If David has high power in his relationship with Danielle, and is therefore very strongly focused on his gastronomic goals when he is with her, he will be less attentive to and less influenced by Danielle’s health goals, given how much attention he is paying to his own internal states—the value of gastronomy and his desire to continue to improve those skills. If, though, he has low power in the relationship, and therefore is only weakly focused on his goals when Danielle is present, he may be more receptive to the health goal cues that she emits, and may thus ultimately be likelier to catch Danielle’s goals for himself. Thus, weak goal focus should promote partner goal contagion. Given that low power in a relationship likely weakens goal focus in the context of that relationship, it may result in greater goal contagion via this mechanism.

Summary. These two lines of reasoning converge to suggest that individuals with low power in their relationships, more often than those with high power, will pursue their partners’ goals, prioritizing and catching those goals. Danielle, if she is high in relationship power, may remain unmoved by the influence of her new food-loving boyfriend—either because she has less motivation to please him, or because she is more focused on her own pursuits—and thus be less likely to catch and prioritize David’s goals. In contrast, we suggest that David, if he is low power in the relationship, will be more vulnerable to influence from Danielle’s healthy ways—either because he has more motivation to please her, or because he is less focused on his own pursuits her—and thus be likelier both to catch and prioritize her goals.

These dynamics have important consequences for the goal pursuit of low power partners in relationships. In everyday life, goals conflict with each other, and compete for limited resources of time and energy. To the extent that low power in a relationship leads people to pursue goals that their partner values, this may come at the expense of their ability to pursue their own goals, as well as their overall psychological health (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2000; Hortop, Wrosch, & Gagne, 2013; Riediger & Freund, 2004).

Overview of Current Research

Five studies explore the role of power in partner goal prioritization and contagion. Study 1 used dyadic analyses to provide preliminary evidence of the overarching relationship between power and goal pursuit that we have hypothesized. More specifically, we employed an experience sampling design to examine how power predicts people's tendency to devote their time to goals that served their own versus their partner's interests, predicting that if power influences goal pursuit as we have proposed, then the end result is that low power individuals, at any given moment, should be especially likely to be pursuing goals that their partner values, and less likely to be pursuing goals that they value independently of their partner. In Studies 2 through 5, we manipulated participants' relationship power, and used laboratory methods to explore more precise operationalizations of partner goal prioritization and contagion. In Study 2, we examined participants' decisions to prioritize (i.e., pursue) their own versus their partner's goals during the experimental session. In Studies 3 and 4, we turned to goal contagion. We manipulated participants' perceptions of their partner's goals, and measured self-reported motivation to pursue those goals for themselves (Study 3) and behavioral pursuit of those goals (Study 4). Finally, in Study 5, we extended our results beyond romantic relationships and tested our hypotheses in small, lab-formed, groups.

Across the studies, we also employ different operationalizations of power, all of which measure or manipulate power relative to the partner. In Studies 2-4, we employ a standard manipulation from the power literature (Galinsky et al., 2003), which manipulates participants' sense of power by asking them to recall a time when they had lower (vs. higher) power than their partner. In the two studies that use dyads (Studies 1 and 5), we assess or manipulate both members' sense of their power. In all studies, our primary hypothesis is that lower-power participants will be especially influenced by the partner's goal pursuit. In the two dyadic studies, we also explore the possibility that our predicted effect will differ depending on the partner's report of power.

In these studies we also had two secondary aims, which we pursued through analyses that we report primarily in the Supplementary Online Material (SOM). First, and most importantly, we sought to explore whether relationship power could be empirically distinguished from commitment and emotional dependence. Our hypotheses are specific to power, and not these related yet distinct constructs, so in Studies 1 and 2 we used them in additional analyses both as covariates and in lieu of power as predictors of our dependent measures. Second, we explored the extent to which findings were driven by relationship maintenance or self-regulation mechanisms. In Studies 1 and 2, we tested the possibility that variables reflecting these mechanisms mediated the effects of power on goal pursuit; in Study 5, we introduced an experimental twist to provide some novel insights regarding the underlying mechanisms. Finally, we also examined the possibility that commitment or emotional dependence moderated the effects of power. These last analyses served no specific aim related to our hypotheses, and indeed we find no consistent pattern of results; we report them in the supplementary materials for the sake of completeness.

Study 1

Study 1 examines how power in relationships affects partners' tendencies to pursue goals that serve their own interests, and those that serve their partners' interests. Study 1 is a preliminary test of our overarching analysis regarding the relationship between power and pursuit of a partner's goals. If our two more specific hypotheses regarding partner goal prioritization and partner goal contagion are true, then the observable outcome, in the real world, should be that low power David spends more time pursuing goals that Danielle values, and less time pursuing goals that he values but that she does not value. Both processes imply that he will more often pursue goals that she values, whether he values them for himself (which may indicate that he has caught them) or not (which may mean he is simply prioritizing them), and that he will consequently have less time to pursue goals that he values but that she does not. We pursue sharpened investigations of each separate sub-process (prioritization and contagion) in the subsequent studies.

We analyzed data from a sample of partners in dating relationships; the dataset contained both partners' perceptions of their power in the relationship, allowing us to test both our overarching hypothesis, as well as to explore the possibility that the pattern of results will differ depending on partner reports of power. The study was designed to explore the everyday goal pursuit of romantic relationship partners, employing an experience sampling procedure (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987; Hektner, Schmidt, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006). Over a period of 7 days, participants were contacted at six random intervals throughout the day, and asked to complete short surveys on their smartphones concerning what goals (if any) they were trying to accomplish at that moment. Participants rated the extent to which their current activity served a goal that mattered to them, as well as the extent to which it served a goal that mattered to their partners. These ratings allowed us to test our hypothesis about partner goal pursuit: Will low power David spend more time pursuing goals that Danielle values, whether he values them or not? Will he in turn spend less time pursuing goals that he values but that she does not value?

To test these ideas, we used participants' ratings to categorize their day-to-day goal pursuits into distinct categories. We focused on three different types of goals that participants might pursue at any given time: *Shared goals*, or goals that both the participant and the partner value; *self-driven goals*, or goals that only the participant values; and *partner-driven goals*, or goals that the participant pursues, but only the partner values. From our hypothesis, we predict that relative to high power participants, low power participants would more often report working on shared and partner-driven goals (i.e., goals that their partner values), and less often report working on self-driven goals (i.e., goals that their partner does not value). Our goal categorization framework also allows for the possibility of *trivial* goals, or goals that the participant pursues in spite of the fact that neither the participant nor the partner values it; our theory makes no predictions for these goals.²

Method

Participants. We analyzed data from the Relgoes study (Hofmann et al., 2015; Hui, Finkel, Fitzsimons, Kumashiro, & Hofmann, 2014). Participants came to the study after responding to ads placed in local newspapers. Two hundred and thirty participants (forming 115 heterosexual couples) enrolled in the study, which also aimed to test several other unrelated hypotheses. For this study, we based our sample size on the number of participants available in the existing dataset; we estimated that the existing 230 participants would provide us ample power to detect even small (i.e., $\rho = .2$) relationships between power and goal pursuit (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). Participants received \$30 as base compensation, and an additional \$30 if they completed more than 70% of the 42 experience sampling questionnaires as well as a post-test which was not related to the present hypotheses.

Couples were eligible to participate if the couple indicated that they were in an exclusive romantic relationship that had existed for at least three months, and if each member was at least 18

years of age; spoke fluent English; and possessed a smartphone with a touchscreen, texting capability, and a data plan. One dyad failed to produce enough data to be included in the analyses; thus our final sample comprised 228 participants forming 114 couples.

Participants' average age was 24.7 years ($SD = 5.0$ years) for males, and 23.4 years ($SD = 4.5$ years) for females. Their ethnic backgrounds reflected the diversity present in the city from which we drew our sample: 54% Caucasian, 16% African American, 16% Hispanic, 12% Asian, 1% American Indian, and 1% reported other backgrounds. Couples had been together for, on average, 2.6 years ($SD = 2.8$).

Procedure. The study comprised an intake session and a seven-day experience sampling period. At the intake session participants separately completed a battery of intake questionnaires, including a demographics form and an eight-item measure of relationship-specific power, adapted from the Generalized Sense of Power scale (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006) to apply specifically to the romantic relationship (e.g., "I think I have a great deal of power," "I can get my partner to do what I want," $\alpha = .83$). They also completed a 7-item measure of commitment to the relationship (e.g., "I want our relationship to last a very long time," $\alpha = .91$; Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998) and a 19-item measure of their emotional dependence on their partner (e.g., "There is no one I need as much as my partner," $\alpha = .86$, Rathus & O'Leary, 1997). We used these measures to differentiate the role of relationship power from the role of these related variables, and to explore possible mediation by these variables, as they both reflect positive relationship motivation.

The day after they completed the intake session, participants entered the experience sampling phase of the study. For seven days, participants received six alerts each day, distributed between 9am and 8pm. A web application sent the alerts following the recommendations of Hektner and colleagues (2006): The app divided each day's 11 hour sampling period into six 110 minute blocks, and participants received an alert at a randomly determined time in each of these

blocks. The only constraints were that a) at least 30 minutes had to separate consecutive alerts, and b) members of each couple received their alerts simultaneously.

The alerts arrived via text message, and contained a link directing participants to an online questionnaire (Hofmann & Patel, 2015). First, participants answered the following question, which determined whether they were pursuing a goal at that moment:

Please tell us about your current situation: Are you trying to accomplish something right now? (Note: This could be something you are trying to get started, complete, attain, achieve, or master, but it could also be something you are trying not to do, trying to avoid, or trying to resist from doing.)

If they answered in the affirmative, participants described their goal as succinctly as possible in their own words. They then provided ratings indicating the degree to which the goal served their own interests and the degree to which the goal served their partner's interests (7-point Likert scales; 0 = *not at all* to 6 = *very much*). These items are measures of how much each partner values the goal being pursued in the moment.

During the orientation session, experimenters instructed participants to respond as quickly as they could to each alert. The links they received with each alert remained active for 3 hours; the median delay in responding was 11.7 minutes. For the 9408 alerts we sent (42 signals times 224 participants), we received 6,756 responses, indicating a satisfactory response rate (72%). Put differently, individual participants responded to an average of 30.2 alerts (out of a possible 42; $SD = 9.5$). Participants generally speaking either did not respond or responded in full (only 2.1% alerts received partial responses), and the median completion time for each response was 4.33 minutes (including time spent responding to the measures not related to the current research).

Results

Data analytic strategy. Of the 6,756 responses participants provided to the daily prompts, 4,587 (67.9%) indicated that they were currently pursuing a goal; these were the only responses that were useful for our purposes. To investigate our hypotheses, we first categorized reported

goals into four categories, based on participants' interest ratings (see Footnote 2 and SOM for details on analyses conducted on the interest ratings directly). We considered scores of 4 or higher on the 0-6 scale as indicating strong interest and scores of 3 or lower as indicating weak interest. We used these cutoffs for the ratings of self and partner interests to sort each nominated goal into one of our four categories: (a) self-driven goals (representing 55.5% of total goals), those that the actor valued strongly but the partner did not value strongly; (b) shared goals (32.4%), those that both partners valued strongly; (c) partner-driven goals (3.5%), those that the actor did not value strongly but the partner valued strongly, and (d) trivial goals (8.6%), those that neither actor nor partner valued strongly. We selected the cut-off points (3 or lower versus 4 or higher on the 0-6 scale) because we reasoned that scores above the midpoint (i.e., above 3) reflected that the actor (or the partner) did in fact value the goal "strongly".

We used HLM (Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2004) to conduct a dyadic Poisson regression analysis (with constant exposure and identity link) to predict goal type frequencies from actor power, partner power, and their interaction. Our primary predictions concerned the effects of actor power: We predicted that David's goal pursuits would reflect greater partner goal pursuit to the extent that he had low power. However, given that the data were available, we also explored the possibility of partner effects (how does David's partner goal prioritization vary with Danielle's power?) and interactions (how does our predicted effect of David's power vary with Danielle's power?).

Actor and partner power were not correlated ($r = .03$, $p = .63$). Because partners were nested within couples, we used the Raudenbush, Brennan, and Barnett (1995) coding approach to denote the two dyad members with dummy codes. Because initial contrast tests indicated that none of the gender-specific estimates differed reliably, we constrained the intercepts and effects to be equal for men and women. This analysis yields an overall intercept, an actor effect, a partner

effect, and an actor \times partner interaction for each frequency analysis, while taking into account the nested nature of the dyadic data.

Primary analyses: Hypothesis tests. As predicted (see Table 1), actor power was negatively related to pursuit of shared goals ($b = -.87, p < .001, \beta = -.15$), (marginally) negatively related to pursuit of partner-driven goals ($b = -.12, p = .065, \beta = -.12$), and positively related to pursuit of self-driven goals ($b = 1.44, p < .001, \beta = .18$). That is, low power participants were likelier to report pursuing activities that served shared and partner-driven goals (goals that their partners valued) and less likely to report pursuing activities that served self-driven goals (goals that they alone valued). Regarding trivial goals, no power effect emerged: Low and high power participants were equally (un)likely to pursue goals that neither the self or partner valued. In sum, low power participants more often pursued goals that mattered to their partner (both when they shared those goals and when they did not) than did high power participants, and less often pursued goals that mattered to them alone. Thus, the study provides initial evidence of a link between power and partner goal pursuit.

Exploratory Analyses: Partner effects and interactions. Having found evidence for our primary prediction, we then explored the possibility of both partner effects and actor \times partner interactions. We found significant effects in both cases. First, partner power generally showed the opposite associations, compared to actor power: Participants with higher power partners were more likely to pursue shared goals ($b = 0.16, p < .016, \beta = .03$) and partner-driven goals (non-significantly, $b = .06, p = .333, \beta = .06$), and less likely to pursue self-driven goals ($b = -0.44, p < .001, \beta = -.05$). In other words, participants with high power partners showed greater partner goal pursuit, compared to participants with low power partners. We had not predicted these effects and hesitate to offer post-hoc explanations, but tentatively speculate that they may reflect similar processes to those that underlie the actor effect. Participants with high power partners may be

especially motivated to please them (a relationship maintenance mechanism), or they may have a lot of exposure to their partners' goals, given that high power individuals tend to be especially goal-focused (a self-regulation mechanism).

Second, we found significant actor \times partner interactions for pursuit of shared goals ($b = .26, p < .001, \beta = .05$), and self-driven goals ($b = -.89, p < .001, \beta = -.11$), but not on pursuit of partner-driven goals ($b = .09, p = .16, \beta = .09$). Overall, the pattern reveals that our predicted actor effect was stronger when partners were low in power ($b_{shared} = -1.13, p < .001, \beta = -.19$; $b_{partner-driven} = -0.21, p = .013, \beta = -.21$; $b_{self-driven} = 2.36, p < .001, \beta = .29$), and weaker when partners were high in power ($b_{shared} = -0.60, p < .001, \beta = -.10$; $b_{partner-driven} = -0.03, p = .768, \beta = -.03$; $b_{self-driven} = 0.53, p < .001, \beta = .06$). Although these were unpredicted effects, and again we hesitate to offer post-hoc explanations, they seem to suggest that the effect of one's own sense of power on goal pursuit is weaker when one's partner is high in power, perhaps because high power partners elicit prioritization and / or contagion in everyone. We return to further investigation of these exploratory questions in Study 5.

Secondary Analyses: Mechanism, and the specificity of power. In additional analyses reported in the Supplementary Online Materials (SOM), we sought evidence that could help us understand the mechanism driving our hypothesized actor effects. In particular, we explored measures that pertained to relationship maintenance or ingratiation (i.e., individuals may pursue a partner's goals because they seek to please their partner) and to self-regulation (i.e., individuals may pursue a partner's goals because the individuals are weaker individual goal pursuers). We found no evidence for either of these mechanisms: The effects of power on goal pursuit were not mediated by variables related to relationship motivation or to self-regulation. However, as we note in the SOM, we should take the null effects regarding the self-regulation mechanism with a grain of salt, given that a) we measured and theorized about power at the level of the relationship, which

should only influence self-regulation in the context of the relationship, but b) the available measures assessed self-regulation in general.

In a second set of additional analyses, also reported in the SOM, we sought to establish the specificity of power and distinguish it from other, related constructs, in particular, relationship commitment and emotional dependence. We found that the effects of power hold while controlling for those variables. We also found that commitment and emotional dependence may play a role similar to, but less strong than, that of power in predicting partner goal pursuit: That is, more committed participants were more likely to pursue shared goals, and more emotionally dependent participants were more likely to pursue shared goals and less likely to pursue self-driven goals. These findings suggest that power's effects, while not mediated by these variables nor reducible to these variables, may function similarly to these variables in promoting the pursuit of a partner's goals. These findings are consistent with theories of relationship commitment (e.g., Rusbult, 1980) and other models of relationship interdependence (e.g., Murray et al., 2009; Murray & Holmes, 2009).

Finally, in exploratory analyses, we examined whether relationship commitment or emotional dependence might moderate the effects of power we found. Our effects were not consistently moderated by either variable; some were stronger among participants with high levels of emotional dependence, whereas others emerged only among participants with low levels of emotional dependence. Overall, these analyses provide no consistent evidence of moderation.

Discussion

Study 1 offers initial evidence for our overarching theoretical contention: Individuals with low power in their relationships, compared to those with high power, reported more often pursuing goals that their partners valued (partner-driven and shared goals), and less often pursuing goals

that they alone valued (self-driven goals). Moreover, these effects were robust to covariates and moderators.

A major benefit of an experience sampling approach is that participants are reporting what they are actually doing in the moment, as part of their everyday lives. Thus, certain power dynamics are associated with people basing their everyday pursuits more on goals that their partners value, and less on goals that they alone value. These results extend findings reported by Righetti and colleagues (2015), who found that lower power individuals report being more willing to sacrifice for their partners, compared to higher power individuals. Here, we have obtained a related finding in the context of goal pursuit in a behavioral experience-sampling paradigm. We also show an interesting form of sacrifice. In addition to pursuing partner-driven goals, and thus completely sacrificing one's own interests, low power participants in our study were also likelier to pursue shared goals, in lieu of self-driven goals. For example, imagine that David hates running, likes to go for nature walks, but prefers to go for bike rides. Because Danielle prefers nature walks, he does that instead. This would likely feel like a "shared interest" to David, but it is nonetheless the case that he is the one modifying his goal pursuits and sacrificing his preference for Danielle's benefit. Danielle, in contrast, gets her #1 choice of action.

The strengths of the experience-sampling method notwithstanding, Study 1 has some important limitations. First and foremost, although the results we have found are consistent with our hypotheses regarding partner goal prioritization and partner goal contagion, we have no direct evidence of the mechanisms driving these particular effects. On the surface, pursuing partner-driven goals seems like prioritization, whereas pursuing shared goals seems like the result of contagion. That said, both effects could result from partner goal prioritization: When David reports pursuing shared or partner-driven goals, he may mean that he is helping Danielle achieve her health goals, goals that matter to her, and which may (as in shared goals) or may not (as in

partner-driven goals) matter to him as well. On the other hand, these effects could also result from partner goal contagion: When David reports pursuing shared or partner-driven goals, he may mean that he is pursuing his own health goals, which Danielle values, and about which he may (as in shared goals) or may not (as in partner-driven goals) feel as strongly as her.

These results are also vulnerable to a motivated reasoning explanation. Low power may lead David to re-conceptualize his existing goal pursuits as helpful to Danielle. In other words, rather than reflecting actual partner goal prioritization, these results may reflect some form of prioritization by rationalization, whereby David is unable to actually prioritize Danielle's goals, but reconfigures his perceptions to reassure himself that he is, in fact, helping her out.

In our remaining studies, we seek to gain more process clarity, by experimentally manipulating power to ascertain the direction of causality, and employing tighter operationalizations of partner goal prioritization and partner goal contagion. Finally, we seek to address a second limitation of Study 1, which is that it is difficult to know whether the results we observed in that study came from partners' explicit influence attempts, or from actors' self-generated partner goal pursuit. In other words, it could be that participants with low relationship power in Study 1 were pursuing goals as a result of direct requests or pressure from their partners. To address this issue, in our remaining studies, we employ paradigms that allow us more certainty on this matter: For example, in Studies 2 through 4, we observe individuals in the lab, separated from their partners, and in Studies 3 and 4 we go a step further, directly manipulating perceptions of the partner's goals, to minimize the possible role of explicit partner influence.

Study 2

In Study 2, we provide a first experimental test of our hypotheses. Specifically, we test the prediction that participants induced to feel low power in their romantic relationship will pursue a charitable goal that their partner values highly, even at the expense of a charitable goal they

themselves value highly. The study design permits us to look at what goals participants pursue when time is limited, thus letting us examine how participants will prioritize their partner's goals relative to their own goals. The experimental manipulation of relationship power and the fact that the partner is not physically present both improve our ability to interpret the findings. If temporary feelings of high or low relationship power can influence people's likelihood of helping their partners achieve their goals, this points to the direction of causality we have hypothesized; if effects occur in the absence of any possible influence attempt on the part of the partner, this suggests that the processes of partner goal prioritization we have outlined can take place even in the absence of explicit requests or pressure from the partner.

In an online experiment, we gave participants the opportunity to earn money for a charity that they valued and for a charity that their partner valued. We manipulated relationship power, and also measured it as an individual difference, along with a series of other relationship constructs related to power. We predicted that relative to participants induced to feel high in relationship power (or who were high in trait-level relationship power), participants induced to feel low in relationship power (or who were low in trait-level relationship power) would more often choose to earn money for their partner's charity, and less often choose to earn money for their own.

Method

Participants. One hundred and forty-seven American residents (71 female; $M_{age} = 33.5$ years, $SD_{age} = 2.9$ years) participated online via Amazon's Mechanical Turk in exchange for a small sum. Most (84.5%) were Caucasian. For this study, we considered the guideline of 50 participants per cell recommended by Simmons (2014). However, because it was the first experimental test of our hypothesis, we aimed for 75 per cell instead.

All participants were involved in romantic relationships; just over half (51.4%) were married, and an additional 20% were cohabitating but unmarried. Participants were ineligible to participate if they failed to select one of: “casually dating – one person”, “seriously dating”, “living together”, “engaged” or “married” on a demographics form; if they did, the next page of the survey indicated that they were not eligible to participate.

Procedure. After they filled in the demographics form, participants completed a set of questionnaires about their relationship: Rusbult and colleagues’ (1998) measures of commitment to the relationship (as in Study 1, $\alpha = .92$), satisfaction with the relationship (e.g., “I feel satisfied with our relationship,” $\alpha = .93$), perceived quality of alternatives to the relationship (e.g., “The people other than my partner with whom I might become involved are very appealing,” $\alpha = .90$), and investment in the relationship (e.g., “I have put a great deal into our relationship that I would lose if the relationship were to end,” $\alpha = .78$), along with a measure of their emotional dependence on their partner (as in Study 1, $\alpha = .92$, Rathus & O’Leary, 1997). They also completed the Relationship Power Inventory (Farrell, Simpson, & Rothman, 2015), which contains two subscales, respectively tapping perceptions of outcome power (e.g., “I have more say than my partner does when we make decisions in our relationship,” $\alpha = .86$) and process power (e.g., “I tend to bring up issues in our relationship more often than my partner does,” $\alpha = .85$).

Participants then began the main experimental session. We showed participants a set of nineteen charities. We displayed the charities’ logos, grouped by category (e.g., animals, children and youth, environment, health and disease, human rights, etc.), and participants clicked first on the charity that was most important to them, and then on the charity that was most important to their partner. Participants could not select the same charity for themselves and their partners; they could only select two different charities. One participant selected no charity for his partner, and therefore we could not compare pursuit of his own goal to pursuit of his partner’s; our final sample

of participants excludes this participant. Once participants had selected their charities, we conducted a manipulation check: Participants rated how important each of the two charities was to them, and to their partner, using 7-point scales for each rating ranging from 1 (*extremely unimportant*) to 7 (*extremely important*). Participants reported that their own charity was more important to them ($M = 5.69, SD = 0.90$) than it was to their partner ($M = 5.15, SD = 1.35$), $t(146) = 5.76, p < .001, d = 0.47$, and that their own charity was more important to them than their partner's charity was to them ($M = 5.29, SD = 1.17$), $t(146) = 5.69, p < .001, d = 0.38$. They also reported that their partner's charity was more important to their partner ($M = 5.85, SD = 0.92$) than it was to them, $t(146) = 6.90, p < .001, d = 0.53$ and more important to their partner than their own charity was to the partner, $t(146) = 8.15, p < .001, d = 0.61$.

Next, participants described some situations they had encountered with their romantic partners. The first of these was a filler task designed to reduce suspicion: "Please recall a recent time or incident when you participated in an outdoor activity with your partner. Please describe your experiences while outdoors—what happened, how you felt, etc. (Examples: a walk in the park, camping etc.)". The second was a manipulation of power with respect to their romantic partner, adapted from a manipulation of power used by Galinsky and colleagues (2003), which manipulates people's relative sense of power. In the low power condition, their task instructions were:

Please recall a particular incident in your relationship in which your partner had power over you. By power, we mean a situation in which your partner had control of your ability to get something you wanted, or was in a position to evaluate you. Please describe this situation in which you did not have power—what happened, how you felt etc. (Examples: not getting to decide whose parents to spend thanksgiving with, being refused a request for affection, not seeing your choice of movie etc.)

In the high power conditions, the task instructions were:

Please recall a particular incident in your relationship in which you had power over your partner. By power, we mean a situation in which you controlled the ability of your partner to get something they wanted, or were in a position to evaluate him/her. Please describe this situation in which you had power—what happened, how you felt etc. (Examples: getting to decide whose

parents to spend thanksgiving with, refusing a request for affection, seeing your choice of movie etc.)

Next, participants completed an anagram task. Participants read onscreen instructions indicating that they would have 5 minutes to complete as many anagrams as they could. Prior to seeing each anagram, they would select a charity; if they solved that anagram correctly then we would donate \$0.25 on their behalf to the charity they had selected for that anagram. The study involved no deception; that is, once data collection ended, we made donations to the charities that participants selected at the rate of \$0.25 per anagram solved.

There were more anagrams than would be possible to complete within the 5-minute timeframe (see Appendix), because we wanted to ensure that all participants had enough anagrams to work on to last the entire 5 minutes. Also, to ensure that participants did not spend too much time on any given anagram, and that they had many opportunities to select charities, the website instructed them that they could skip anagrams that gave them difficulty. We hypothesized that participants in the low power condition, compared to those in the high power condition, would more often choose to benefit the charity their partner valued, and would less often choose to benefit the charity that they themselves valued.

Results

Primary analyses: Hypothesis Tests. We subjected the number of anagrams participants assigned to their own and to their partner's charity to a mixed-model ANOVA, with power (high vs. low) as the between-subjects factor, and charity (own vs. partner's) as the within-subjects factor. This analysis yielded a main effect of charity: Overall, participants prioritized their own charity over their partner's, $F(1, 145) = 13.51, p < .001, \eta^2_p = 0.09$. However, this effect was qualified by the predicted power \times charity interaction, $F(1, 145) = 4.21, p = .042, \eta^2_p = 0.03$ (see Figure 1): Participants who had just described having high relationship power assigned more anagrams to their own charity than to their partner's charity, $F(1, 145) = 16.51, p < .001, d = 0.50$,

but participants who had just described having low relationship power showed no such preference for their own charity, $F(1, 145) = 1.31, p = .254, d = 0.13$. Breaking down the simple effects the other way, participants in the low power condition assigned more anagrams to their partner's charity, $F(1, 145) = 4.51, p = .035, d = 0.28$, and fewer anagrams to their own charity, $F(1, 145) = 5.11, p = .025, d = 0.29$, than did participants in the high power condition. In other words, when participants temporarily felt low in relationship power, they expended more effort towards their partner's charity goal, even though this came at the expense of effort expended toward their own goal.³

Secondary analyses: The specificity of power and moderation by relationship

variables. In additional analyses reported in the SOM, we turned to the relationship constructs we had measured at the beginning of the study. First, we found that process power (but not outcome power) as measured using the Farrell et al. (2015) scale produced effects similar to those of manipulated relationship power, even when controlling for other relationship variables, and that none of these other relationship variables did. Second, we found some evidence that the effect we reported was stronger among highly committed participants, and those who perceived few alternatives to their current relationship. Given that we did not predict this pattern nor observe it in any other study, we hesitate to interpret it post-hoc; however, it may reflect that individuals with low relationship are even more likely to prioritize their partners' goals when they feel their relationship (and thus, their low-power status) is enduring.

Discussion

Study 2 provided support for our primary hypothesis. Romantic partners induced to feel low in relationship power—as well as romantic partners who chronically felt low in process power—chose to pursue their partner's goals more often, and their own goals less often, compared to higher power romantic partners. In other words, romantic partners who felt low in power in

relation to their partner pursued their partner's goals, at the cost of their own goal pursuit, to a greater extent than did partners who felt high in power.

Interestingly, these results could also potentially reflect partner goal contagion: The driver of low power participants' pursuit could have been either their desire to help their partner achieve his/her charity goals, or their own (new) desire to support that charity. However, additional analyses reported in the SOM suggest that this goal contagion explanation may be unlikely. In our analyses with measured power, there was no contagion effect—that is, low power participants did not report valuing their partner's charity any more than high power participants. This may reflect the fact that we designed this study with prioritization, not contagion, in mind: We directly asked participants to choose a charity that they themselves valued along with a charity that their partner valued. This request may have prompted them to specifically select charities that they and their partners felt differently about—that is, they may have intentionally selected charities where no goal contagion had occurred or would be likely to occur. More importantly, even holding constant the extent to which participants reported valuing their partner's charity, low-power individuals still more often chose to earn money for that charity over their own. In other words, even accounting for any traces of contagion, the supplemental results of Study 2 seem to point to partner goal prioritization. As such, although we cannot definitively rule out the possibility that the Study 2 results are due to partner goal contagion, the partner goal prioritization explanation is more consistent with the study's design and results.

In sum, results in Study 2 provide experimental support for the role of relationship power in individual goal pursuit, demonstrating that low power individuals will choose to pursue their partners' goals even when doing so comes at the expense of their own. Importantly, participants in this study were not engaging in coerced or pressured help for their partners, given that partners were not there to encourage or coerce them, nor privy to what participants did in the study. Thus,

Studies 1 and 2 provided evidence in support of our partner goal prioritization hypothesis. In Studies 3 and 4, we turn to directly measure partner goal contagion, or the tendency for low power David to not only pursue the health goals that Danielle has set, but also adopt health goals of his own to match hers.

Study 3

In Study 3, we examined how power would affect partner goal contagion. We recruited student participants who were dating fellow students, manipulated their relationship power as in Study 2, and then had them engage in a visualization exercise wherein we manipulated the strength of their partner's goals while holding the partner's behavior constant. In a visualization task, we asked participants to imagine returning home to find their partner buried in books. In the strong goal condition, the partner explained that he or she needed to continue studying to achieve academic goals, whereas in the weak goal condition, the partner explained the he or she would continue studying, but implied that she was not doing so to achieve any academic goal. We predicted that participants induced to feel low power with respect to their partner would catch their partner's explicit (but imagined) academic goal—that is, that they would express more commitment to their own academic goals—to a greater extent when they imagined their partners having strong, versus weak, academic goals. In other words, we predicted that low power participants would match their partner's goal states, and report stronger academic goals when the partner reported stronger academic goals.

Study 3's design has several strengths. First, we directly ask participants about the strength of their own academic goals, which pertains quite clearly to their own academic performance, not their partner's. Therefore, our predicted effect in Study 3 does not measure partner goal prioritization: Participants are not being asked if they want to pursue their partners' academic goals, but rather, they are asked specifically about their commitment to their own academic goals.

Second, by manipulating participants' temporary perceptions of their partner's goals, we rule out the role of any past influence attempts on the part of their partner. Finally, in both conditions, participants imagine their partner engaging in the exact same behavior, which helps us distinguish any effects from behavioral mimicry or other forms of behavioral imitation (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003). That is, if low power participants report stronger academic goals for themselves to a greater extent in the strong than the weak goal condition, that suggests our effect is driven by the goals of the partner, rather than by the behavior itself, which is identical in both conditions.

Method

Participants. One hundred and seventy-five American residents (86 female; $M_{age} = 22.7$ years, $SD_{age} = 4.3$ years) participated online via Amazon's Mechanical Turk in exchange for a small payment. Most (71.4%) were Caucasian. In this study, considering the size of the effect we found in Study 2, we felt comfortable aiming for the recommendation of 50 participants per cell (Simmons, 2014), and originally collected data from 194 participants. However, 19 participants were accidentally admitted to the study even though they were ineligible (see Footnote 4), and we dropped them prior to analysis. Even with this error, based on the effect size we found in Study 2, a sample size of 174 participants gave us power of approximately 0.61 to detect the key interaction (Faul et al., 2009).

All participants were students, and involved in romantic relationships with another student; most (66.8%) were either casually or seriously dating, and a third (33.2%) were living together and / or married. Participants were eligible to participate if they met the following two conditions. They had to have selected one of: "casually dating – one person", "seriously dating", "living together", "engaged" or "married" on a demographics form⁴; they also had to indicate that their partner was either a part-time or full-time student. If they failed to meet these conditions, the next page of the survey indicated that they were not eligible to participate.

Procedure. After they filled in the demographics form, participants completed the measures of commitment ($\alpha = .94$) and emotional dependence ($\alpha = .91$) measures from Studies 1 and 2. We removed the measures of satisfaction, investment and alternatives given that they had produced no unique results in Study 2, and that they are strongly related to commitment, conceptually and empirically (Rusbult, 1980). Participants then completed the power manipulation from Study 2.

Next, we manipulated participants' perceptions of their partner's goals using a scenario task. Participants read the following instructions: "We will now ask you to engage in a visualization exercise. Please type the scenario into the box below. As you're typing, try to picture the experience in your mind. Try to really see and feel the events as they unfold." The scenario that participants typed out appeared as a non-copy-able image on their screen. The text was nearly identical across conditions, save for the last two sentences (we also matched the pronouns used to describe the partner to the gender participants had selected for their actual partners; here we present the text from the female partner condition):

Yesterday I came home from school to find my partner hard at work, her nose buried in textbooks. "How was your day?" I asked. "Oh you know," she replied. "It was alright. I literally haven't moved from this spot, though, I've been studying all day for this test I have next week. How was your day?" I set my bag on the floor, took off my jacket, and sat down across from her. "My day was pretty good. I picked up some groceries on the way home!" She seemed distracted. "That's great," she finally said. "Look, I'm really happy to see you and everything, but maybe we can talk later?"

Strong goal condition: I really want to ace this test. I'm really invested in my academic future and I think I need to spend a couple more hours reading before I feel really confident I can do as well as I'd like to."

Weak goal condition: I'm supposed to be studying for this test. I figure I should probably spend a couple more hours reading before I can be done with it."

Five participants did not comply with the task instructions (they typed no text, typed only a portion of the text, or entered unrelated text). We report results excluding those participants in the main body of the text, and results including them in Footnote 5.

To ensure that the manipulation changed participants' perception of the target's goals, we pilot tested the manipulation with a separate sample of 50 individuals who were in romantic

relationships. In this pilot sample, participants in the strong goal condition agreed more than participants in the weak goal condition with the statement that “My partner spoke of having strong academic goals” ($M_{strong\ goal} = 6.59$, $SD_{strong\ goal} = 0.89$; $M_{weak\ goal} = 4.57$, $SD_{weak\ goal} = 1.97$, $t(48) = 4.80$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.32$), and agreed less with the statement that “My partner was studying, but didn’t really seem to care much about academic goals” ($M_{strong\ goal} = 1.44$, $SD_{strong\ goal} = 1.01$; $M_{weak\ goal} = 2.35$, $SD_{weak\ goal} = 1.90$, $t(48) = 2.14$, $p = .037$, $d = 0.60$). However, participants in both conditions agreed to the same degree that “My partner seemed to be studying hard” ($M_{strong\ goal} = 6.52$, $SD_{strong\ goal} = 1.05$; $M_{weak\ goal} = 6.39$, $SD_{weak\ goal} = 0.84$, $t(48) = 0.47$, $p = .643$, $d = 0.14$) and “My partner was doing a lot of school work” ($M_{strong\ goal} = 6.48$, $SD_{strong\ goal} = 0.64$; $M_{weak\ goal} = 6.39$, $SD_{weak\ goal} = 0.72$, $t(48) = 0.38$, $p = .703$, $d = 0.13$).

Following the visualization exercise, we measured academic motivation by having participants rate their agreement with the following items: “I’m strongly committed to achieving my academic goals,” “It is extremely important to me to achieve my academic goals,” and “My academic and career goals are important to me.” We combined these items into a single index ($\alpha = .91$). Because the scenarios demonstrate weak versus strong academic goal pursuit, we consider goal contagion to be reflected by the extent to which participants score higher on reports of academic motivation in the strong (vs. weak) condition. That is, if participants are catching their partner’s goal in this situation, they should report stronger academic motivation on their own academic goals in the strong (vs. weak) goal condition.

Results

Primary analyses: Hypothesis tests. We predicted that participants who had just described an instance where they had low power relative to their partner would express greater motivation for their own academic goals when they imagined their partners having strong academic goals—that is, we predicted that low power participants would show more evidence of

goal contagion than high power participants. We tested this prediction by submitting participants' scores on the academic motivation index to a 2 (power: low versus high) \times 2 (visualization: strong goal versus weak goal) between subjects ANOVA. This analysis yielded a main effect of power: Participants who just described an instance where they had low power relative to their partner reported having stronger academic goals overall, compared to participants who instead described an instance where they had high power, $F(1, 166) = 4.09, p = .045, \eta^2_p = .02$. This effect was qualified by a marginally significant interaction, $F(1, 166) = 3.77, p = .054, \eta^2_p = .02$ (see Figure 2). Low power participants only reported stronger academic goals than high power participants when they imagined their partner having a strong academic goal ($M_{low\ power} = 6.55, SD_{low\ power} = 0.59; M_{high\ power} = 5.93, SD_{high\ power} = 1.17$), $F(1, 166) = 7.77, p = .006, d = 0.67$. When they imagined their partner engaging in academic behavior without having a strong academic goal, low and high power participants reported having virtually equally strong academic goals themselves, ($M_{low\ power} = 6.20, SD_{low\ power} = 1.01; M_{high\ power} = 6.18, SD_{high\ power} = 1.12$), $F(1, 166) = 0.003, p = .956, d = 0.02$. Breaking down the simple effects the other way, low power participants who imagined their partner having a strong academic goal reported marginally stronger academic goals than low power participants who imagined their partner simply engaging in academic behavior (with the implication that s/he had weak academic goals), $F(1, 166) = 3.67, p = .057, d = 0.42$; high power participants in both conditions reported similar levels of academic goals, $F(1, 166) = 1.01, p = .316, d = 0.22$.⁵

Secondary analyses: Moderation by relationship variables. As in Studies 1 and 2, we conducted several additional analyses, reported in the SOM. Neither commitment nor emotional dependence moderated the effect of power.

Discussion

Study 3 provided initial support for our hypotheses regarding partner goal contagion: Participants who felt low in power relative to their partners matched the partner's goal state, reporting stronger motivation on their own academic goals in the strong goal condition than in the weak goal condition. This study thus supports our general hypothesis—that low relationship power causes people to center their own goal-directed behavior around their partners' goals—as well as our more specific partner goal contagion hypothesis. It demonstrates that individuals with low relationship power do not merely prioritize their partners' goals, as shown in Studies 1 and 2, but actually catch and pursue them for themselves.

Moreover, the design of this study helped us explore the role of two alternative explanations. First, by manipulating temporary perceptions of the partner's goals, the design rules out the possibility that partner goal contagion emerges solely from direct persuasion, pressure, or other types of explicit social influence from the partner. The partner in the scenario is clearly referencing his/her own goals, and not instructing the participant about what to value. And yet, low power participants nonetheless catch the goal and increase their own motivation, providing evidence that these dynamics may emerge in everyday life without explicit or intentional influence attempts from the partner. Second, by holding behavior constant, the design rules out the possibility that these effects reflect behavioral contagion or mimicry (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003).

Its strengths notwithstanding, Study 3 had at least two weaknesses. First, it employed self-reported goal strength, rather than actual goal pursuit, as the dependent variable. Although this measure has the advantage of being clear about the intended target of the goal (i.e., it helps clarify whether participants valued achievement for themselves or for their partners), and although it indicates participants' intentions to commit resources to pursuing this goal, it falls short of actually demonstrating that commitment behaviorally. Second, our manipulation of goal strength confounded goal strength with regulatory focus (Higgins, 1997): The strong goal partner spoke of

wanting to do well, whereas the weak goal partner said he / she *should* study. Although our pilot study showed that the manipulation did successfully alter perceptions of goal strength, the manipulation may also have affected perceptions of regulatory focus. It is not clear how this confound could explain the results; nonetheless, in Study 4, we seek to address these limitations, as well as to expand our exploration of partner goal contagion to a novel context.

Study 4

In Study 4, we sought to replicate and extend our findings from Study 3, using a behavioral paradigm. As in Studies 2 and 3, we manipulated participants' relationship power. As in Study 3, participants then engaged in a visualization exercise that manipulated their perception of their partner's goals. They again imagined returning home to find their partner buried in books. This time, however, rather than manipulate the strength of the partner's academic goal, we manipulated the partner's superordinate goal of being either prosocial or competitive. Participants imagined their partners explaining that they wanted to do well at school and get a good job afterwards, either because they wanted to help out family members, or because they wanted to outperform family members. That is, the design treats academic goals as means to either cooperative or competitive higher-order goals (Kruglanski et al., 2002). After reading this passage, participants then completed two economic decision tasks in which they decided how to share money between themselves and another participant. We predicted that participants we induced to feel low (vs. high) power relative to their partners would adopt a prosocial goal in these unrelated tasks when they imagined their partner having a prosocial goal, but adopt a more competitive goal in these unrelated tasks when they imagined their partners having a competitive goal.

Method

Participants. One hundred and ninety-seven students of a private American university (121 female; $M_{age} = 23.7$ years, $SD_{age} = 4.8$ years) participated online in exchange for a small

payment. Most were either Caucasian (39.1%) or Asian American (34.0%). As in Study 3, we aimed for the 50 participants per cell recommended by Simmons (2014).

All participants were involved in romantic relationships with a student; most (78.2%) were either casually or seriously dating, and just over a fifth (21.9%) were living together and / or married. Participants were eligible to participate if they met the following two conditions. They had to have selected one of: “casually dating – one person”, “seriously dating”, “living together”, “engaged” or “married” on a demographics form; they also had to indicate that their partner was either a part-time or full-time student. If they failed to meet these conditions, the next page of the survey indicated that they were not eligible to participate.

Procedure. After they filled in the demographics form, participants completed our measures of relationship commitment ($\alpha = .93$) and emotional dependence ($\alpha = .91$). Participants then completed the power manipulation from Studies 2 and 3.

Next, participants completed the partner goal manipulation task. As in Study 3, participants engaged in a visualization exercise, in which they typed out a scenario that appeared as a non-copy-able image on their screen. As in Study 3, the text was nearly identical across conditions, save for the last two sentences (and we again matched the pronouns used to describe the partner to the gender participants had selected for their actual partners):

Yesterday I came home from school to find my partner hard at work, her nose buried in textbooks. “How was your day?” I asked. “Oh you know,” she replied. “It was alright. I literally haven’t moved from this spot, though, I’ve been studying all day for this test I have next week. How was your day?” I set my bag on the floor, took off my jacket, and sat down across from her. “My day was pretty good. I picked up some groceries on the way home!” She seemed distracted. “That’s great,” she finally said. “Look, I’m really happy to see you and everything, but maybe we can talk later? I really want ace this test, it matters so much to me to do well at school because I really want to make sure I get a good job after I graduate.

Prosocial condition: You know my family’s not super well off, and I’d really like to be able to help them out. I worry about them, and I want to do everything I can to make sure they’re ok!”

Competitive condition: I’m so tired of hearing about how well all my family members are doing, professionally, I’d really like to show them I can do just as well. I want to do everything I can to make sure they know I measure up.”

Seventeen participants did not comply with the task instructions (as in Study 3, they either entered no text, entered only a portion of the text, or entered unrelated text). We report results excluding those participants in the main body of the text, and results including them in Footnote 7.

We pilot tested our manipulation with a separate sample of 48 individuals who were in romantic relationships. This pilot sample confirmed the validity of our manipulation, with participants differing as expected on all statements we asked them to rate: “My partner seemed to have really cooperative goals” ($M_{prosocial} = 5.00$, $SD_{prosocial} = 1.35$; $M_{competitive} = 3.88$, $SD_{competitive} = 1.81$, $t(47) = 2.45$, $p = .018$, $d = 0.75$), “my partner seemed *not* to care about helping out others” ($M_{prosocial} = 1.83$, $SD_{prosocial} = 1.44$; $M_{competitive} = 3.80$, $SD_{competitive} = 1.94$, $t(47) = 4.03$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.15$), “my partner seemed to have really competitive goals” ($M_{prosocial} = 4.71$, $SD_{prosocial} = 1.94$; $M_{competitive} = 6.20$, $SD_{competitive} = 0.96$, $t(47) = 3.43$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.97$) and “my partner seemed *not* to care about doing better than others” ($M_{prosocial} = 2.71$, $SD_{prosocial} = 1.76$; $M_{competitive} = 1.84$, $SD_{competitive} = 1.31$, $t(47) = 1.97$, $p = .055$, $d = 0.56$).

Following the visualization exercise, participants in the main study completed two tasks that measured their prosocial/competitive goals. Both tasks were designed to measure participants’ Social Value Orientation, or the strength of their goals to benefit themselves versus their goals to benefit others. In one task, participants made nine decisions about how to distribute hypothetical valuable points between themselves and another participant (Van Lange, 1999). For each decision trial, participants selected one of three possible distributions of points; on each trial, one of the options corresponded to a prosocial goal (e.g., the participant and the other each receive 480 points), one corresponded to an individualistic goal (e.g., the participant receives 540 points and the other receives 280 points), and one corresponded to a competitive goal (e.g., the participant receives 480 points and the other receives 80 points). In this task, participants are classified as prosocial / individualistic / competitive if they select the prosocial / individualistic / competitive

distribution on six or more of the nine trials; they are not classified if there is no option they select on six or more trials (see Van Lange, 1999). Seven participants could not be classified because their choices were not sufficiently consistent; these participants are excluded in the analyses of this categorical variable (see Van Lange, 1999, but see also Footnote 6).

In another task, participants made real decisions about how to distribute actual money between themselves and another participant. In this task (taken from Murphy, Ackermann, & Handgraaf, 2011), they learned they would distribute money between themselves and another person. The task instructions (see Figure 3) specified that at the end of the study, participants would either receive the amount of money they had chosen to distribute to themselves, or the amount of money that another participant had chosen to distribute to the “other”. In other words, they knew that if they chose to behave prosocially, that could cost them and benefit someone else in a material way, and if they chose to behave selfishly, that could benefit them and cost someone else in a material way. In other words, they were making a consequential, not hypothetical, choice.

The task consisted of five trials; in each trial, participants saw 11 different options for how they could distribute money to themselves and another participant. Participants selected the option they preferred on each trial. Conceptually, this task gives participants the option of maximizing the total amount of money that they and the other received (i.e., pursuing a prosocial goal) maximizing their own outcomes (i.e., pursuing an individualistic goal), or maximizing their superiority over the other person (i.e., pursuing a competitive goal). Accordingly, the task allowed us to categorize all participants as prosocial, individualistic, or competitive (see Murphy et al., 2011, for the categorization rules). This study involved no deception; that is, once the study concluded, we did in fact distribute money to participants following the procedure outlined in the task instructions: We randomly assigned half of the participants to be actors and the other half to be targets, paying actors the amount of money they said they would keep for themselves, and

paying targets the amount of money a randomly selected actor said he or she would give to the “other”.

Both of these tasks were designed to yield a classification for each participant. However, these classifications obscure the more fine-grained numbers upon which they are based: choices made across nine trials (hypothetical task), and a continuous score reflecting the arctan of the ratio of money given to money kept (real money task). We report analyses with the (traditional) categorizations in the main text, and analyses with the more fine-grained measures in Footnote 6. These analyses produce very similar results.

Results

Primary analyses: Hypothesis tests. We predicted that participants who had just described an experience of low, but not high, power relative to their partner would behave more prosocially when they imagined their partners having a prosocial goal, and behave more competitively when they imagined their partners having a competitive goal. We tested this prediction by testing for a power (low versus high) \times visualization (prosocial versus competitive) interaction.

First, we considered the effects of our manipulations on participants’ categorization on the SVO task involving hypothetical points. Typically, in this task, very few participants receive the competitive categorization (see Van Lange, 1999); in our study only five out of 180 (fewer than 3%) did. Given this imbalance, rather than consider each categorization separately, we conducted a binary logistic regression predicting participants’ categorization (0 = non-prosocial, 1 = prosocial) from power (-1 = low, 1 = high), visualization (-1 = competitive, 1 = prosocial) and their interaction. This analysis revealed the predicted interaction, $b = -0.58$, $Wald = 11.03$, $p = .001$, and the pattern was in line with our predictions. Among participants who imagined a partner with a prosocial goal, more low power participants than high power participants were categorized

as prosocial (78.2% vs. 52.5%), $b = -0.59$, $Wald = 7.90$, $p = .005$, $OR = 0.31$. Among participants who imagined a partner with a competitive goal, fewer low power participants than high power participants were categorized as prosocial (55.6% vs. 80.0%), $b = 0.58$, $Wald = 4.22$, $p = .040$, $OR = 3.20$. Breaking down the simple effects the other way, among low power participants, those who imagined their partner having a prosocial goal were more likely to be categorized as prosocial than those who imagined their partner having a competitive goal, $b = 0.53$, $Wald = 5.06$, $p = .024$, $OR = 2.87$; this effect was reversed among high power participants, $b = -0.64$, $Wald = 5.97$, $p = .015$, $OR = 0.28$.

Second, we considered participants' categorization on the SVO task involving real money. In this task as well, typically very few participants score in the competitive range (see Murphy et al., 2011); in our study none did. We therefore conducted a binary logistic regression predicting participants' categorization (0 = individualistic, 1 = prosocial) from power (-1 = low, 1 = high), visualization (-1 = competitive, 1 = prosocial) and their interaction. The interaction emerged as significant, $b = -0.40$, $Wald = 5.01$, $p = .025$, and the pattern supported our hypotheses. Among participants who imagined a partner with a prosocial goal, marginally more low power participants (80.0%) than high power participants (64.4%) were categorized as prosocial, $b = -0.40$, $Wald = 3.36$, $p = .067$, $OR = 0.45$. Among participants who imagined a partner with a competitive goal, non-significantly fewer low power participants (63.9%) than high power participants (80.0%), were categorized as prosocial, $b = 0.41$, $Wald = 2.02$, $p = .155$, $OR = 2.26$. Among low power participants, those who imagined their partner having a prosocial goal were marginally more likely to be categorized as prosocial than those who imagined their partner having a competitive goal, $b = 0.41$, $Wald = 2.84$, $p = .092$, $OR = 2.26$; this effect was non-significant and in the opposite direction among high power participants, $b = -0.40$, $Wald = 2.23$, $p = .135$, $OR = 0.45$.^{6,7}

Secondary analyses: Moderation by relationship variables. As in Studies 2 and 3, we sought to explore the role of related variables (see SOM). Neither commitment nor emotional dependence moderated the effect of power.

Discussion

In Study 4, low power participants who imagined their partners pursuing a prosocial goal invested their own resources—both real and hypothetical—in pursuit of a prosocial goal. When they instead saw their partners pursuing a competitive goal, they kept more of their resources to themselves. We observed no such pattern, in fact if anything we observed the opposite, among high power participants. Moreover, this occurred in the context of novel tasks for which participants had no a priori goals. In other words, this study provides behavioral support for the hypothesis that individuals who experience low power in their relationships catch their partners' goals and pursue them as their own. Interestingly, low power participants seemed especially susceptible to catching their partners' prosocial goal; the effects were somewhat weaker when the partner had a competitive goal. Given this effect was unpredicted, and we only had this one opportunity to observe it, we are reticent to draw strong conclusions from it. However, it may be of interest for future research: For example, it may speak to the ultimate function of goal contagion—if it is consistently the case that prosocial goals are more easily caught, this may fit with the idea that goal contagion serves prosocial functions (Aarts et al., 2004; Sinclair et al., 2005). As another example, if partner goal contagion serves some sort of goal to please the partner or improve the relationship, it may be sensible for it to occur especially in the context of prosocial others, who may be more easily persuaded to share their resources.

In Studies 1 and 2, we made several attempts to uncover the mechanism of our effects. Across those analyses, we found no evidence of mediation to support either the relationship

motivation account or the self-regulation account of these effects. In our final study, we made one last attempt to explore mechanism, using an experimental manipulation.

Study 5

The primary goal of Study 5 was to use real interactions with novel groups to conceptually replicate the findings of Studies 3 and 4—that is, that low power in the context of a given relationship makes people especially prone to catch the goals of their partner in that relationship. Study 5 tests this prediction in the context of new interdependent relationships with strangers, rather than in the context of pre-existing romantic relationships, which allows us to generalize the basic principles of our hypothesis to other forms of interpersonal relationships. It also looks at how people catch goals in more naturalistic settings, via cues transmitted through real conversations, as a complement to Studies 3 and 4's more controlled hypothetical scenarios.

We manipulated power in participants engaging in a four-person group interaction, which enabled us to collect dyad-level data for each participant with three other individuals. In each group, we led one participant to anticipate having high power in a subsequent task, and led the other three participants to anticipate having low power in that task. Following the manipulation, each four-person group engaged in an unstructured discussion about their personal goals. Participants then evaluated the extent to which each member of their group prioritized academic achievement, and the extent to which each member of their group had made them feel more motivated to pursue an academic achievement goal.

This design offered a conceptual replication of Study 3, in which we (a) manipulated power, (b) manipulated perceptions of a partner's academic goal strength, and (c) measured participants' own self-reported academic goal strength. In Study 5, because we used a live interaction procedure, we tapped these constructs in different ways. First, we employed a different manipulation of power—rather than use a recall task, we manipulated participants' expected role

in an upcoming task. Second, we measured participants' perceptions of their partners' academic goals following the live interaction (rather than manipulating such perceptions via hypothetical scenarios).

Third, for our dependent measure, we measured partner-induced motivation to pursue academic goals rather than partner-independent motivations to pursue such goals. That is, rather than simply asking how motivated participants felt to pursue the goal, as we did in Study 3, here we asked participants to directly report on the extent to which each partner motivated them to pursue the goal. Because participants had three partners during the live interaction, this partner-induced motivation measure allowed us to examine how much *each partner's* academic goals was linked to participants' post-interaction academic goal motivation. A limitation of this measure is that it assumes participants can identify the source of their motivation; however, an advantage of the measure is that it allows us to explore how low power individuals respond to different types of partners—that is, different potential sources of motivation.

Indeed, our secondary goal in Study 5 was to look more closely at how low power individuals respond to different types of interaction partners, to attempt to gain insight into the processes that might underlie these effects in everyday life. Given that our efforts to explore mechanism in earlier studies generated no informative findings, we took a different approach and used an experimental manipulation in Study 5 to provide some initial clues. Specifically, we manipulated the type of partner with whom our low power actors interacted. If low power led participants to catch the goals of some types of partners over others, we could use that information to gain some insight into the potential process.

Based on work showing that lower power leads to motivation to please the partner (Copeland, 1994; van Kleef et al., 1998), we thought it was possible that low power participants' goal contagion should depend on their *perceptions* of other's high power. In other words, low

power participants should be particularly likely to catch the goals of others they *believe* to have high power, because they want positive relationships with those others. In contrast, based on work showing that lower power leads people to be particularly vulnerable to situational influences, because of their own lack of internal focus (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Galinsky et al., 2003; Galinsky et al., 2008; Guinote, 2007), we thought it was possible that low power participants' goal contagion should depend on the salience of the social trigger itself—that is, on the target's *experience* of being high power. In other words, low power participants should be particularly likely to catch the goals of others who are particularly strong social triggers. Because high power leads to more dominant, expressive, and goal-directed behavior, we speculated that participants who experienced high power would be stronger triggers.

Based on this theorizing, we introduced an additional twist to our design. We gave all participants information not only about their own power, but also about the power of the other members of their four-person group, such that every participant believed that there were three low power members and one high power member. However, some low power participants were misinformed, such that their perceptions of others' power were mismatched from others' experienced power. This procedure allowed us to explore whether low power participants would be particularly likely to catch the goals of others in whom they perceived high power, others who felt high power, neither, or both.

To summarize, we predicted that, as in Studies 3 and 4, relative to high power participants, low power participants would tend to catch their partners' goals: They would report being more academically motivated by others who they perceived to have strong (vs. weak) academic goals. We also explored how this tendency would emerge with different targets, and investigated in that regard the relative importance of *actual* partner power versus *perceived* partner power.

Method

Participants. Two hundred and forty undergraduate students participated in the study (144 female; $M_{age} = 19.3$ years, $SD_{age} = 1.7$ years). Approximately half (57.2%) were Caucasian; 15.4% were Hispanic/Latino, 8.4% were African-American, 2.2% Asian-American, 8.4% other/multiracial, and 8.4% did not report their ethnicity. Sample size was determined by the number of participants that signed up for the study within the constraints of the laboratory and research assistant schedules. Given our design, with each participant providing three rows of data (one set of ratings for each quad mate), we had ample power to detect effects of the size we have documented thus far.

One hundred and twenty-seven of the students were enrolled in an introductory family studies course and earned extra credit toward that course for participating in the study; the other 113 students were same-sex friends recruited by those students to participate (each student recruited one friend, although seven did not fulfill this part of the procedure). This sample is also used in a paper by Eastwick and colleagues (2013), who use measures not described here to conduct analyses not relevant to the present purposes.

Procedure. Participants registered for the study online, with both members of each friendship dyad reserving the same laboratory session. An experimenter randomly assigned participants to a four-person group, called a *quad*, and each quad participated in a separate room. Members of each friendship dyad were always assigned to separate quads, to ensure that each quad consisted of four strangers.

First, participants completed a slight variant of a power manipulation developed by Galinsky and colleagues (2003). The experimenter handed each member of the quad an envelope containing a slip of paper, and asked them to read it carefully. This slip of paper informed all students that one of them would have high power (i.e., decision-making rights and the responsibility of evaluating others' performance) on a subsequent Lego-building task, whereas the

other three would not. As such, each quad had one high power member and three low power members. In some quads, all participants saw the exact same information (that a given person would have high power and the other three people would have low power); for these participants, perceived power and experienced power were always matched. In other quads, however, not all participants saw the same information. In these quads, two of the low power quad members incorrectly believed that the third low power quad member had high power, and that the high power quad member had low power; for these participants, perceived power and experienced power were always mismatched. Table 2 illustrates this distribution of actual and perceived power in both types of quads. Including quads in which we dissociated experienced power from perceived power enabled us to test for independent moderating effects of others' experienced power and moderating effects of participants' perceptions of others' power.

After reading instructions, the four students engaged in a 5-minute, unstructured discussion of their personal goals, prior to which the experimenter instructed them not to discuss the forthcoming Lego-building task. After five minutes, the experimenter returned and handed each student a clipboard containing a short questionnaire about the interaction. This questionnaire included a 2-item, target-specific measure of *target goal strength*, which assessed the degree to which each of the other three members of the quad held strong academic goals ("This person seems to value academic achievement goals" and "This person seems successful at academic achievement"; $r = .80$). It also included a 2-item, target-specific measure of *partner-induced motivation*, which directly assessed the degree to which the participant felt that he or she would be or has been academically motivated by each of the other three members of the quad ("I felt inspired by this person to work harder on academic achievement" and "I think if this person and I spent time together, I would be more successful at academic achievement"; $r = .58$). In other words, these items asked participants how much being around each target did motivate them,

academically, or would, if they spent time together.⁸ Participants rated all items on 7-item scales (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 7 = *Strongly Agree*).

After all four participants had completed this questionnaire, the experimenter informed them that, in light of time considerations, they would not be able to complete the Lego-building task. Participants then completed other tasks not relevant to the present study before being thanked and debriefed.

Results and discussion

Data analytic strategy. Each quad included four students, and each student reported on the other three members of the quad, yielding 12 rows of data per quad (4 students \times 3 targets). To account for this data non-independence, we employed multilevel modeling procedures nesting targets within participant and participants within quad (Snijders & Bosker, 2012).

Primary analyses: Hypothesis tests. Our primary prediction was that participants assigned to have low power in the context of the upcoming group task would show a stronger tendency to catch their partners' goals, compared to participants assigned to have high power. That is, we predicted that they would report being more academically motivated by partners who had stronger (vs. weaker) academic goals, to a greater degree than high power participants. To test this prediction, we regressed partner-induced motivation ratings on target goal strength, participant power (low = 0; high = 1), and their interaction, nesting ratings within participant and participants within quad (see Table 3). As predicted, and as depicted in Figure 4, the target goal strength \times participant power interaction attained significance, $b = -0.17$, $t = 2.38$, $p_{approx} = .02$, $\beta = -.14$ (see note beneath Table 3). Participants assigned to have low power reported being more academically motivated by targets with strong, compared to weak, academic goals, $b = .59$, $t = 17.42$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .60$. The same was true, although to a lesser degree, of participants assigned to have high power, $b = .42$, $t = 6.60$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .43$. In other words, all participants tended to match the goal

states of their partners, but they did so to a greater degree if they expected to have low power in their upcoming interactions with their partners. Breaking down the simple effects the other direction, low power individuals reported being more academically motivated by partners who conveyed high academic motivation (+1 *SD*) than did high power participants, $b = -0.38$, $t = 2.70$, $p_{approx} = .007$, $\beta = -.15$, whereas participants high and low in power reported being equally (un)motivated academically by partners who conveyed low academic motivation (-1 *SD*), $b = 0.02$, $t = 0.12$, $p_{approx} = .90$, $\beta = .01$. In sum, although both high and low power participants seemed to report matching the goals of their interaction partners, participants with low power did so to a larger degree. These results closely parallel the results from Study 3, where we found that low power participants, more than high power participants, matched the strong academic goals of their partners.⁹

Exploratory analyses: Partner goal contagion from different types of partners. We next turned to explore how low power participants reacted to different types of partners, to examine whether some partners were stronger triggers of goal contagion than others. (Our design, with each quad group containing only one single high power member, did not allow us to explore a parallel effect within high power participants.)

We explored how low power participants reacted to others who *were* either low or high in power, and to others whom they *perceived* to have low or high power. To do so, we conducted a regression predicting low power participants' motivation ratings using target goal strength, target experienced power (low = 0; high = 1), target perceived power (low = 0; high = 1), and both strength \times power interactions (see Table 4). The only significant effect of interest was a target goal strength \times target *experienced* power interaction, $b = 0.20$, $t = 2.67$, $p_{approx} = .008$, $\beta = .17$ (see Figure 5); the target goal strength \times target *perceived* power did not approach significance.

Thus, when a target *actually* had high power, low power participants reported being more academically motivated by her to the extent that they perceived her to have strong (vs. weak) academic goals, $b = .71$, $t = 11.55$, $p_{approx} < .001$, $\beta = .72$. When a target *actually* had low power, this effect remained significant, but became smaller, $b = .51$, $t = 14.56$, $p_{approx} < .001$, $\beta = .52$. In other words, low power participants tended to match the goal states of all their partners, but this effect was especially strong with partners who saw themselves as high (vs. low) in power. Breaking down the simple effects the other direction, when they perceived a target to have strong academic goals, low power participants felt more academically motivated by him/her if he/she had high, rather than low, power, $b = .29$, $t = 2.59$, $p_{approx} = .01$, $\beta = .11$. By contrast, when they perceived a target to have weak academic goals, low power participants felt if anything *less* academically motivated by her if she had high (vs. low) power, $b = -.17$, $t = 1.41$, $p_{approx} = .16$, $\beta = -.06$.

Because goal contagion was greater from targets who experienced high power, the findings suggest that goal contagion may have emerged here because low power actors were particularly vulnerable to strong social triggers (partners who experienced high power). Because goal contagion was not greater from targets who were erroneously perceived as having high power, the findings suggest that goal contagion did not emerge here because low power actors were particularly motivated to please those they saw as being high in power. That is, because of their vulnerability to influence from the social environment, likely a result of their lack of focus on their own internal states (Galinsky et al., 2003), low power actors were likelier to catch goals from others who felt they had high power (and thus, presumably, behaved in accordance with those feelings). Indeed, the findings point to a dyadic process: Experiencing high power led partners to change their behavior, which made their goals more salient and thus easier to catch.

Of course, this analysis begs the question of how, precisely, participants changed their behavior when they experienced high power, and how this made their low power quadmates especially likely to catch their goals. We exerted significant effort to code the behaviors of high versus low power participants in the videotaped interactions, and to examine these behaviors as potential mediators of the role of power in these analyses (see details in the SOM). Coders blind to the power assignments agreed that the high power quad members behaved differently than the low power quad members. These high power participants focused the conversation more on themselves and their goals, which may be consistent with the self-regulation account. However, they also appeared more interpersonally attractive, and generated more interest from the group, which may be consistent with the relationship motivation account. Moreover, high power participants also displayed more warmth toward others and interest in others' goals, which is inconsistent with the existing work on how power influences social attention from which we derived our original hypotheses (Briñol et al., 2007; Eaton et al., 2009; Fiske, 1993; Galinsky et al., 2006; Gruenfeld et al., 2008; Hogeveen et al., 2014). These unexpected findings may speak to emerging new evidence that power can sometimes make people feel responsible for others, and act prosocially as a result (e.g., Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001; DeCelles, DeRue, Margolis, & Ceranic, 2012; Gordon & Chen, 2013; Tost, in press; Tost, Wade-Benzoni, & Johnson, 2015).

In any event, additional analyses quashed our hopes of discovering evidence of mechanism in these coded variables. None of the many differences between high- and low-power participants mediated our findings: Including these variables in no way eliminated or even reduced the role of target power in producing goal contagion. Thus, while we can conclude that our power manipulation did in fact change participants' behavior, we found no hint of how such changes might have influenced the goal contagion experienced by their partners.

Summary. In sum, the findings of Study 5 replicated the findings of Studies 3 and 4 in a more naturalistic design and a group setting: Low power actors caught the goals of their partners to a greater extent than did high power actors. Exploratory analyses examined how goal contagion among low power participants was shaped by different types of targets; the pattern of findings suggested that low power may lead to greater goal contagion when there are stronger cues in the social environment. Although on the surface this finding may be more consistent with a self-regulation mechanism than with a relationship maintenance mechanism, follow-up analyses provided no additional evidence to support this case. In particular, even though high power participants spoke more about themselves and about their academic goals, this difference did not explain why they were more contagious than low power participants. We therefore leave our final study confident in the primary effect we have repeatedly demonstrated, but still unable to render a verdict regarding its mechanism.

Interestingly, the pattern we observed in Study 5 was somewhat at odds with the unpredicted pattern we observed in Study 1. That study mirrored the results we have found here in one respect: In Study 1, participants whose partners reported having high power engaged in greater partner goal prioritization; here, low power participants experienced greater goal contagion at the hands of high power partners. However, in Study 1, we found that our effect was attenuated among low power individuals, whereas here we documented the partner effect specifically among our low power participants. We hesitate to over-interpret this difference, given that (a) we did not predict the effect in Study 1, (b) we did not have high-power participants in Study 5, so we cannot actually compare the pattern in full (i.e., we may well have found a stronger partner effect among those participants), and (c) Study 1 measured an outcome that could have resulted from contagion *or* prioritization, or other related processes. In any case, we acknowledge that further work may shed more light on the meaning of these results.

General Discussion

Five studies provided support for our hypotheses, showing that low power individuals have a stronger tendency to devote their resources to the pursuit of their partners' goals. We found that low power individuals both prioritize and catch the goal states of their close relationship partners more often than do high power individuals. In Study 1, an experience sampling study, participants who felt chronically low in power more often pursued goals that matched their romantic partners' interests, and less often pursued goals that matched their own interests and not their partners'. This is the outcome we would expect to see under both our prioritization and contagion hypotheses. In Study 2, we took an experimental approach, manipulating momentary feelings of power, and conducted our study in the laboratory, away from any potential influence attempts on the part of the partner. This study found that participants who recalled feeling low power chose more often to prioritize their partner's goals, compared to participants who recalled feeling high in power.

In Studies 3 and 4, we turned to partner goal contagion. We again manipulated power, and also manipulated perceptions of the partner's goals, to eliminate the possibility that the partner's previous influence attempts may drive any effects. In Study 3, low power participants reported having stronger academic goals when they imagined their partner acting on a strong academic goal, compared to when they imagined their partner engaging in the same academic behavior with only a weak academic goal. In Study 4, low power participants gave away more of their resources to others—i.e., they pursued a prosocial goal—when they imagined their partner having a prosocial goal. Likewise, they kept more of their resources to themselves—i.e., they pursued an individualistic or competitive goal—when they imagined their partner having a competitive goal. Finally, in Study 5, we provided a conceptual replication of these findings in small groups of strangers: Low power participants reported catching the goal states of their partners more so than did high power participants. In exploratory analyses, we found that low power participants caught

the goals of partners who saw themselves as high in power, to a greater extent than the goals of low power partners or partners erroneously viewed as being high in power.

In summary, in each study, we found evidence consistent with the hypothesis that low power individuals, compared to high power individuals, tend to distribute their self-regulatory resources in a way that is more centered around their partners' goals. We observed this phenomenon in contexts in which it was either impossible (Studies 2, 3, and 4) or unlikely (Study 5) that partners were intentionally attempting to effect this change in participants.

Finally, in two of our five studies we were able to explore how the processes we explored were shaped by different types of partners. In Study 1, participants whose partners reported having high power resembled participants who themselves reported having low power: Participants with high power partners more often pursued goals that matched their partners' interests, and less often pursued goals that matched their own. In Study 5, our participants appeared to experience greater partner goal contagion from partners who experienced high (vs. low) power, but not from partners whom they thought had high (versus low) power. Together, these findings highlight the importance of actual dyadic behavior in these phenomena; the Study 5 findings further suggest that low power may lead to greater goal contagion because of its effect on vulnerability to social cues. However, in the absence of clear predictions regarding these effects, we hesitate to draw any firm conclusions about partner effects or interactions. In contrast, the actor effect of power was predicted, and was consistently supported in all five studies.

Partner Goal Prioritization and Contagion: Distinct Yet Related Relationship Processes

With this research, we have introduced partner goal prioritization and partner goal contagion as two instances of the ways in which individuals can choose to devote resources to their partners' goals. Although the two processes are closely related in this sense, they are distinct in terms of the target of the goal in question. If David prioritizes Danielle's health goal, he will

strive to achieve exactly what she is trying to achieve, which is Danielle's health: That is, he will work to make Danielle a healthier person. If David catches Danielle's goal to pursue health for herself, he will adopt it for himself: That is, he will work to make himself a healthier person.

Though these two processes are conceptually distinct, and yet they may sometimes yield the same behavioral outcomes, which makes them difficult to disentangle, empirically. In particular, the two processes may often produce the same outcomes in terms of the goals people pursue with shared activities. Whether David prioritizes Danielle's goal for Danielle to be healthy, or catches her goal to be healthy himself, he will become more likely to cook healthier meals for the two of them to share, and to prefer to celebrate their anniversary with a hiking tour of the Alps, rather than with a beach trip to Mexico. The two variants will also produce similar outcomes if the goal target is common to both parties. If Danielle has a goal to help make her community healthier, then so long as David and Danielle share a community, the outcome will again be the same: Whether he prioritizes her goal (and works to make Danielle's community healthier) or catches it (and works to make his own community healthier), he will work to achieve the same end.

When it comes to the goals people pursue with nonshared activities, though, prioritization and contagion should sometimes produce different outcomes. For example, if Danielle has a goal to participate in a triathlon, partner goal prioritization would lead David to take on more of Danielle's household responsibilities so she can spend weekend days doing long runs. Partner goal contagion would lead him to want to participate in the triathlon himself, which would likely reduce his interest in taking on any extra household responsibilities. The two variants will also produce different outcomes if the goal target is not common to both parties. If David and Danielle have a long-distance relationship, and Danielle has a goal to make her community healthier, then

partner goal prioritization would motivate David to make Danielle's community healthier, whereas partner goal contagion would motivate him to do the same for his own community.

In the present paper, we have not explored the intricacies of the similarities and differences between the partner goal prioritization and contagion. Rather, we simply aimed to establish both as important goal pursuit dynamics within close relationships—within transactive goal systems (Fitzsimons et al., 2015)—and to make the broader point that these dynamics will be influenced by the relationship's distribution of power. We look forward to future research that may explore empirically conditions that favor prioritization over contagion.

Implications for Research on Goal Pursuit and Goal Contagion

In the meantime, our findings relate to prior work on how close relationships influence goal pursuit. In terms of partner goal prioritization, numerous findings have demonstrated that close partners help each other achieve their goals (e.g., Brunstein et al., 1996; Drigotas et al., 1999; Girme et al., 2013; Sarason et al., 1990). Here, we have shown that it is especially likely that low power individuals will help their partners achieve goals. Of course, it is not only low power individuals who help their partners, and there are likely many other qualities of the individual and the relationship that affect the tendency to prioritize a partner's goals. Interestingly, recent evidence suggests that good self-regulators are especially good at surrounding themselves with instrumental others—those who will help them achieve their goals (vanDellen, Shah, Leander, Delose, & Bornstein, 2015). Connecting the current work to this research, we suggest that it is possible that good self-regulators tend to surround themselves with low-power relationship partners, to leverage those partners' desire to help them achieve their goals.

In terms of partner goal contagion, research has demonstrated that relationship partners can also serve to activate or trigger certain goals and shape goal-related behavior (Andersen, Reznik, & Manzella, 1996). For instance, when people think of their friends, they activate and pursue a

goal to validate their self-views (Kraus & Chen, 2009), and students who try to please their parents with their academic achievements will work harder on academic tasks after being primed with their parents (Chartrand, Dalton, & Fitzsimons, 2007; Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003; Leander, Shah, & Chartrand, 2011; Shah, 2003; see also Andersen & Chen, 2002). Related research more specifically demonstrates goal contagion (Aarts et al., 2004) among close partners. For instance, upon learning that a friend has an imminent academic deadline, participants tended to cognitively activate their own academic goals (Leander & Shah, 2013). Our results suggest that these tendencies are likely to be moderated by relationship power, such that they are less likely to be found among those with high power in the relationship. Interestingly, some research has shown that individuals will occasionally react against the goals of their partners (Chartrand et al., 2007; Leander et al., 2011); our findings raise the possibility that these tendencies might be more likely among those with high relationship power.

Implications for Close Relationships Research

The dynamics we explored in this manuscript have potentially important downstream consequences for relationship functioning and quality. One interesting question raised by the current findings is the extent to which prioritizing and catching a partner's goals is good or bad for relationships. It seems uncontroversial that providing support for a partner's goals would help the relationship (e.g., Brunstein et al., 1996). If Danielle pursues fitness, she is likely to benefit if David helps her pursue fitness. Thus, partner goal prioritization seems likely to benefit relationships.

In terms of partner goal contagion, the picture is perhaps less clear. Most scholars suggest that social tuning facilitates smooth interactions (e.g., Ireland et al., 2011; Lakin & Chartrand, 2003; Loersch et al., 2008; Sinclair et al., 2005; Tomasello et al., 2005; Walton et al., 2012), and Anderson and colleagues (2003) found that emotional contagion predicted satisfaction. Based on

such evidence, it is plausible that goal contagion may be a route to smoother and more positive relationship interactions. If Danielle pursues fitness, she and David may get along better if he also begins to value fitness for himself. However, it is also possible that catching a partner's goals could have negative relationship consequences in some situations. It is possible to imagine that people may find it threatening (Tesser, 1988), disingenuous, intrusive, or annoying if their partner copies their goals. Indeed, in our experimental studies, it was clear that participants prioritized or caught their partner's goals without their partner instructing them to do so, which leaves open the possibility that they would do so in everyday life even if the partner would in fact prefer a different outcome.

On a related note, it is unclear how partners will perceive those who engage in partner goal prioritization or partner goal contagion. Although Danielle loves fitness, she may well have found David's gourmand abilities to be appealing, and if he drops them to take up her fitness goals, this may negatively affect her attraction to him. Indeed, both processes often tend to come at the cost of people's own independent goals: The more time David spends helping Danielle get healthy, or getting healthy himself, the less time and energy he will have to pursue his own goals. Imagine if David puts less and less time into his cooking over time. As his skills get rusty, he may enjoy his pursuit less and less, which may ultimately lead Danielle to perceive David as less successful or less interesting. This may be particularly true if David abandons goal pursuits for which he was skilled and about which he was passionate, and instead pursues goals that aren't as easy or as fun for him. Changing from a bad-ass cook to a half-assed fitness fan may not be a successful relationship motivation strategy in the long run.

Thus, our research highlights the importance of determining whether and under what circumstances partners *like* sharing goals. Partners with similar goals might have fewer conflicts when planning what activities to pursue together, but conflict might emerge if they become

competitive, or if they feel they are losing their independent identities (e.g., Shulman & Knafo, 1997; see Markus & Kitayama, 1991), or if contagion challenges their perceptions of each other's interests and success. There may also be consequences of both partner goal prioritization and adoption beyond the immediate relationship. How will David's friends perceive him if he abandons his culinary pursuits and instead helps Danielle with her health goals, and perhaps even starts to pursue health goals himself? How will this behavior affect his own self-esteem over time? Overall it remains unclear whether the goal pursuit process we have documented ultimately helps or harms close relationships, or the individuals within them.

Implications for Power Research

Research on power has repeatedly demonstrated that high power promotes effective goal pursuit, while low power undermines effective goal pursuit (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2008; Gruenfeld et al., 2008; Guinote, 2007; Karremans & Smith, 2010; Smith et al., 2008). Our findings cast this important observation—that high power improves goal pursuit—in a different light, suggesting that low power individuals do not necessarily pursue goals less effectively. Instead, they may simply choose their goals differently, more often prioritizing the pursuit of goals that serve their relationship partners' interests. For example, in Study 2, low power participants solved just as many anagrams as high power participants overall; they simply more often chose to solve anagrams that could benefit their partner's goal than did high power participants. In a typical psychological study of power and goal pursuit, the “pursue the goal for someone else” condition is not included, so that good performance would be missed. In Study 3, low power participants actually reported greater commitment to academic goals than high power participants—but *only* if they imagined their partner holding an academic goal. In other words, our findings call for a more nuanced study of goal pursuit among individuals with low power. By focusing on self-driven goals

rather than socially shared or partner-driven goals, past research may have come to prematurely negative conclusions about the effects of low power on goal pursuit.

A second way in which our findings speak to the literature on power pertains to our additional analyses in Study 5. Participants to whom we assigned high power in an upcoming task made the conversation more about themselves, as predicted by existing literature (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2006; Hogeveen et al., 2014); however they also acted with more warmth, interest and openness towards others, which seems at odds with the traditional findings. We speculate that these results may relate to a burgeoning new literature on power and social responsibility: Recent findings suggest that power can sometimes make people act with more benevolence towards others and a greater concern for ethics (e.g., Chen et al., 2001; Decelles et al., 2012; Gordon & Chen, 2013; Tost et al., 2015). High power participants in our study may have felt responsible for their quadmates, and therefore have made an effort to pay attention to them. Moreover, we found this effect while at the same time also finding that higher power participants tried to focus the conversation more on themselves. This points to the need for future research on the relationship between the self-focusing and other-focusing effects of power.

One final consideration when it comes to the construct of power is that we have reported on the effects of relationship power specifically: In all of our studies, we measured or manipulated power with regard to specific relationship partners, and then measured partner goal prioritization and contagion with regard to these partners specifically. We have thus left open several questions: Will David either prioritize or catch Danielle's goals after a day when his boss made him feel low power at work? To ask the same question in a different way: Will David, feeling low power relative to Danielle, find himself especially likely to prioritize or catch his best friend's goals, or his office mates'? More broadly, how far do these effects generalize beyond close relationships?

The two mechanisms we propose would cast these questions in a slightly different light, which we describe in the next section.

Mechanisms: Relationship maintenance, Self-Regulation, and...?

Based on the strong literature on the psychological effects of power (e.g., Anderson et al., 2002, 2003; Galinsky et al., 2003, 2006, 2008; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Guinote, 2007; Slabu & Guinote, 2007; Smith et al., 2008), we considered two potential mechanisms for the effects of power on goal pursuit in our studies. First, we posited that low power individuals may orient themselves around their partners' goals to please their partner and maintain a positive relationship. Second, we posited that low power individuals may orient themselves around their partners' goals because they lack focus on their own goals and are thus particularly susceptible to picking up others' goals, like other cues in the environment.

These two mechanisms tell different stories about how these effects might generalize beyond the domain of close relationships. Under a relationship maintenance account, when David feels low power relative to Danielle, he wants to maintain his relationship with her, specifically. So it seems unlikely he would respond by prioritizing and catching the goals of others, at least initially. If, however, he finds he cannot preserve his relationship with Danielle, it is possible that he would try to pre-emptively find a substitute for her by endearing himself to appealing others, pursuing their goals in the hopes of increasing their attraction to him (see Finkel & Eastwick, 2015). Nevertheless, under a relationship maintenance account, David's initial response to low relationship power is likely focused on Danielle and her goals.

Under a self-regulation account, though, when David feels low power relative to Danielle, his ability to focus on his own goals may suffer. If he encounters a cue to others' goals—Danielle's goals *or* anyone else's—in such a state, he may find himself prioritizing or catching them. Of course, he is especially likely to be experiencing the effects of his low power relative to

Danielle when he is in her presence, and less likely to be experiencing those effects when both she and her goals are far from his mind. So even under a self-regulation account, Danielle may be more likely than other people to serve as the source for David's goal prioritization and contagion; nevertheless, David may find himself pursuing the goals he sees in others whom he often sees with Danielle.

Setting aside these specific questions, we exerted substantial effort across studies to test our two proposed mechanisms in diverse ways, but we found a remarkable lack of evidence: No variable mediated our effects, and the effects held while controlling for relationship commitment and emotional dependence (Studies 1 and 2) and for other variables relating to the value participants placed on their partners (Study 5). Thus, our findings did not offer support for the notion that low power individuals prioritize and catch their partner's goals as a way to please their partner. The studies provided fewer opportunities to assess the self-regulatory mechanism, however Study 1 failed to find mediational evidence for the role of trait self-regulation variables, and although Study 5's findings were initially suggestive of the role of self-regulation, follow-up analyses failed to support its role.

Gravity: A metaphor for understanding goal contagion in dyadic contexts. In the face of this lack of empirical evidence, we instead turned to theorizing about power in close relationships (Simpson et al., 2014) to develop a model of the role of power in goal pursuit in close relationship contexts. This model relies on both Lewinian field theory (Lewin, 1935) and a simple metaphor drawn from the world of physics. Principles of gravity explain how objects with different masses move toward each other through space (Newton, 1999). In particular, objects will move through space until they converge on the same point, and the less massive object moves towards the more massive object at a faster rate than the reverse, such that the less massive object travels a greater distance.

Now consider a multidimensional space wherein each dimension represents a particular goal, as though reflecting two of Lewin's tension systems (Lewin, 1935). People can be located within that space such that their position on each dimension reflects the strength with which they hold that dimension's goal. If we conceptualize power as analogous to mass within this metaphoric space, we can derive hypotheses consistent with the results we have found here (see Figure 6). Translating the principle described in the paragraph above, people will move towards each other's goals until they converge on the same ones, and less powerful partners will shift their goal pursuits more quickly than more powerful partners will, such that less powerful partners will end up shifting their goal pursuits more. In other words, the goals two partners end up pursuing will more closely resemble the high power partner's original goals, compared to the low power partner's.

Figure 6 illustrates in more detail how this metaphor maps onto an exploration of power and goal contagion in dyads. Holding partner power constant and varying actor power (i.e., rows 1 vs. 2, or rows 3 vs. 4), low power actors will move further towards their partners than high power actors; this is consistent with the effects of actor power that we have demonstrated.

Of course, just because this metaphor fits well with these hypotheses, we cannot necessarily infer that it can tell us more about the reality of goal pursuit in close relationships beyond these two hypotheses. If we suppose that it can, however, it offers a number of novel predictions that may merit consideration in future research. For one thing, it supports the partner effects we found in Studies 1 and 5: Holding actor power constant and varying partner power (i.e., rows 1 vs. 3, or rows 2 vs. 4), actors with higher power partners will move further towards those partners than actors with lower power partners; this is consistent with the effects of partner power that we have demonstrated. Future research might investigate this possibility more systematically.

For another, according to the principle of gravity, objects that are more distant move more slowly towards each other than objects that are close. According to the parallel principle of our metaphor, this would mean that partners whose goals are more disparate will be slower to start pursuing each other's goals than partners whose goals are closer. This prediction is intriguing: If Danielle and David differ on their fitness and culinary goals, but share career and social goals, David may quickly become a gym rat like Danielle. By contrast, if Danielle and David have nothing in common, even Danielle's high power and David's low power may not be sufficient to cause him to adopt her goals. This prediction makes intuitive sense, however it stands in contrast with a different prediction: If partners are already close in space, i.e., if partners already hold similar goals, perhaps as a result of their feelings of closeness (e.g., Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991; Aron, Mashek, & Aaron, 2004), we may observe fewer partner goal contagion effects, given that partners already share most of each other's goals.

As a final example, the gravity metaphor makes evident the fact that people do not exist only in relation to a single relationship partner, but rather they operate within a larger network of relationship partners, all of whom we could locate within the same multidimensional space. David may have a romantic relationship with Danielle, but he may have other close relationships with other partners, whose goals may differ from Danielle's. Perhaps his best friend, Paul, is a workaholic. David may feel competing urges to pursue and adopt Danielle's fitness goals and Paul's career goals, but given his limited resources, he may not be able to do both fully. In the end, the goals he ultimately pursues may depend on his relative power with not only Danielle, but Paul. Future research may test these and other hypotheses derived from the gravity metaphor.

Future Directions and Conclusions

Setting aside this speculative metaphor, our research raises some interesting issues for future research. First, the processes we have documented may vary with different types of

power—for example, Danielle might have power over David for a number of reasons (e.g., French & Raven, 1959; see also Cheng, Tracy, Foulsham, Kingstone, & Henrich, 2013; Simpson et al., 2014). Depending on the type and stability of Danielle’s power, David may be more or less likely to prioritize and catch her goals. Second, these processes may also vary with different types of goals—if Danielle’s own goal progress would be disrupted by David adopting the same goal for himself (if, for example, her goal is to become the next president), then for goal contagion to be functional, we might expect David to prioritize her goal, helping her to pursue it, but to avoid catching this goal and pursuing it for himself. Third, the processes may be related in ways we have not considered. In addition to the conditions under which they will yield the same versus different results, described earlier in the General Discussion, there may also be times where one leads to the other. If David chronically prioritizes Danielle’s health goals, he may come to adopt his own health goals as a result, either because he learns that he does enjoy and value healthy pursuits, or even because he interprets his own behavior as indicating that he values health (Bem, 1972). Similarly, it is probably likelier that if David catches Danielle’s health goal, he will understand her goals more easily, and thus, perhaps be likelier to prioritize it above other goals he could pursue.

Although there are unanswered questions about boundary conditions for these phenomena, the current studies provided consistent support for the role of power in determining who prioritizes and catches their partners’ goals. These effects may be very consequential for goal outcomes over the long run. If David tends to put Danielle’s goals slightly higher in his priority list most days, centering his goal-directed behavior around her goals and not around his goals, his progress on the goals that matter to him—and the nature of the goals that matter to him—will change over time. By investing his limited resources of time and energy towards the goals that Danielle values, he will undoubtedly be left with less of those resources for other goals. Many of us have witnessed friends changing their interests when they begin new romances. (Perhaps some of us have even

done so as well.) The current findings suggest that to understand that tendency, it is important to examine relationship power.

Footnotes

¹ In goal contagion work, participants are considered to have caught a goal if they match the state of another person's goal with their own actions, whether that means taking on a totally new goal or changing the value of an existing goal. For example, in the goal contagion study described here, the goal to earn money was not a novel goal for participants. The manipulation increased their motivation towards an existing goal, leading them to devote resources to the pursuit of that goal over other available goals, like finishing the experiment quickly or choosing an easier task. In everyday life, given that the adoption of entirely new goals is rare (e.g., a religion conversion), and that motivation for even highly valued goals ebbs and flows from day to day and moment to moment (e.g., Touré-Tillery & Fishbach, 2011), it is this type of goal contagion that likely best captures the phenomenon we are investigating in the present article.

² We conducted our main analyses on these categories because we believe that the goal types they represent are different from each other in a meaningful psychological way. However, we recognize that in doing so we lost important variance present in the continuous measurements. We therefore analyzed the raw data as well and obtained similar results; we report these analyses in the SOM.

³ We also found that low power participants, but not high power participants, earned more money for their partners' charity than for their own charity; however, this was a function of number of anagrams allocated. Low power participants did not perform any better (i.e., they did not solve a higher percentage of the anagrams they attempted) than high power participants in pursuit of their partner's goal. Therefore we conclude that low relationship power caused participants to try harder and to thus succeed more in pursuit of their partner's goal, compared to high relationship power, but not to perform any more efficiently.

⁴ Due to a miscommunication with a research assistant, the study website was programmed to exclude only participants who said they were single, divorced or widowed, and to admit participants who said they were casually dating several people at once. Given that the entire the study was predicated on participants having a single relationship partner for whom they could answer all questions and whom they could imagine during the visualization exercise, we do not report further on these participants; we also corrected the programming error before running Study 4.

⁵ When we included data from the five participants who did not complete the visualization task as instructed, we found similar results. The power \times visualization interaction remained marginally significant, $F(1, 171) = 2.90, p =$

.090, $\eta^2_p = 0.02$; low power participants still reported stronger academic goals than high power participants in the strong goal condition, $F(1, 171) = 6.52, p = .012, d = 0.59$, but not in the weak goal condition, $F(1, 171) = .02, p = .893, d = 0.03$; participants in the strong goal condition still reported (marginally) stronger academic motivation than those in the weak goal condition if they had low power, $F(1, 171) = 2.87, p = .092, d = 0.37$, but not if they had high power, $F(1, 171) = 0.74, p = .390, d = 0.18$.

⁶ We also conducted these analyses using the more fine-grained dependent variables we referred to in the methods section – and behavior in each of the nine trials in the hypothetical points task, and the arctan of the ratio of money given to money kept in the case of the real money task. For the hypothetical task, a multilevel analysis of participant choice on each of the nine trials (0 = competitive, 1 = individualistic, 2 = prosocial), nesting trial within participants, and using power condition (-1 = low power, 1 = high power), visualization condition (-1 = competitive, 1 = prosocial) and their interaction as fixed factors revealed the predicted interaction, $b = -0.13, t = 3.45, p < .001, \beta = -.24$. Among participants who imagined their partner having a prosocial goal, low compared to high power participants picked more prosocial and fewer competitive options, $b = -0.12, t = 2.62, p_{approx} = .010, \beta = -.22$; among participants who imagined their partner having a competitive goal, low compared to high power participants picked more competitive and fewer prosocial options, $b = 0.14, t = 2.35, p_{approx} = .020, \beta = .26$. Among low power participants, those who imagined their partner having a prosocial goal were more likely to be categorized as prosocial than those who imagined their partner having a competitive goal, $b = 0.13, t = 2.45, p_{approx} = .015, \beta = .23$; this effect was reversed among high power participants, $b = -0.13, t = 2.43, p_{approx} = .016, \beta = -.23$. For the real money task, a 2 (low versus high power) \times 2 (prosocial vs. competitive) ANOVA on the arctan score also revealed the predicted interaction, $F(1, 176) = 4.30, p = .040, \eta^2_p = 0.02$. Among participants who imagined their partner having a prosocial goal, low compared to high power participants behaved more prosocially, $F(1, 176) = 4.29, p = .040, d = 0.41$; among participants who imagined their partner having a competitive goal, we saw no significant differences, $F(1, 176) = 1.06, p = .305, d = 0.23$. Among low power participants, those who imagined their partner having a prosocial goal were non-significantly more likely to be categorized as prosocial than those who imagined their partner having a competitive goal $F(1, 176) = 1.18, p = .279, d = 0.22$; this effect was reversed among high power participants, $F(1, 176) = 3.33, p = .070, d = 0.43$.

⁷ When we included data from the seventeen participants who did not comply with the visualization task instructions, we found similar results. The power \times visualization interactions remained, $b_{hypothetical} = -0.44, Wald =$

7.53, $p = .006$; $b_{real} = -0.32$, $Wald = 3.76$, $p = .053$. Low power participants received non-significantly more prosocial categorizations than high power participants when they imagined a partner with a prosocial goal, $b_{hypothetical} = -0.54$, $Wald = 7.35$, $p = .007$, $OR = 0.34$, $b_{real} = -0.33$, $Wald = 2.52$, $p = .112$, $OR = 0.53$, but non-significantly fewer when they imagined a partner with a competitive goal, $b_{hypothetical} = 0.33$, $Wald = 1.78$, $p = .183$, $OR = 1.93$, $b_{real} = 0.32$, $Wald = 1.48$, $p = .223$, $OR = 1.89$. These simple effects were weaker than those we reported in the main text, which is not surprising given that more than one in every 11 participants included in this analysis failed to complete the critical manipulation.

⁸ The second item in this index is ambiguous with respect to whether it captures the extent to which participants feel that being around the target would make them more motivated, or the extent to which participants feel that the target would provide them with tangible help for their academic goals. Given its high correlation with the first item, which is clearly about motivation—and given that many scholars object to single-item measures—we considered it reasonable to analyze the two together. However, when we analyze the two items separately we find similar, if not identical, results.

⁹ This study also assessed the contagion of physical fitness goals. The results for academic goals did not extend to the physical fitness case, perhaps because the academic context in which the study took place was so far removed from physical fitness activities.

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Table 1 – Coefficients for the analysis of Study 1

Goal type Effect	<i>No covariates</i>					<i>Controlling for commitment & emotional dependence</i>				
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	β
Shared										
Intercept	6.42	0.07	224	<.001		6.25	0.07	218	>.001	
Actor	-0.87	0.07	224	<.001	-.15	-0.91	0.07	218	>.001	-.16
Partner	0.16	0.07	224	.016	.03	0.09	0.07	218	.168	.02
A × P interaction	0.26	0.06	224	<.001	.05	0.35	0.06	218	>.001	.06
Partner-driven										
Intercept	0.69	0.07	224	<.001		0.69	0.07	218	>.001	
Actor	-0.12	0.07	224	.065	-.12	-0.13	0.07	218	.048	.13
Partner	0.06	0.07	224	.333	.06	0.03	0.07	218	.642	.03
A × P interaction	0.09	0.06	224	.161	.09	0.08	0.06	218	.219	.08
Self-driven										
Intercept	11.07	0.07	224	<.001		11.07	0.07	218	>.001	
Actor	1.44	0.07	224	<.001	.18	1.25	0.07	218	>.001	.15
Partner	-0.44	0.07	224	<.001	-.05	-0.51	0.07	218	>.001	-.06
A × P interaction	-0.89	0.06	224	<.001	-.12	-1.17	0.06	218	>.001	-.15
Trivial										
Intercept	1.70	0.07	224	<.001		1.67	0.07	218	>.001	
Actor	-0.07	0.07	224	.278	-.03	-0.05	0.07	218	.412	-.02
Partner	-0.18	0.07	224	.006	-.08	-0.19	0.07	218	.005	-.08
A × P interaction	0.19	0.06	224	.003	.08	0.21	0.06	218	.002	.09

Note: Bolded effects pertain to our primary hypotheses

Table 2 – *Structure of quads: Assigned and perceived power (Study 5)*

Accurate perception quads:					
Member	Assigned power	Perceived power of...			
		A	B	C	D
A	HIGH	HIGH	low	low	low
B	low	HIGH	low	low	low
C	low	HIGH	low	low	low
D	low	HIGH	low	low	low
Inaccurate perception quads:					
Member	Assigned power	Perceived power of...			
		A	B	C	D
A	HIGH	HIGH	low	low	low
B	low	HIGH	low	low	low
C	low	low	HIGH	low	low
D	low	low	HIGH	low	low

Table 3 – Regression analyses testing actor effects (Study 5)

Predictor	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i> ^a	<i>β</i>
(Constant)	3.93	0.06	68.64***	
Participant power	-0.18	0.11	1.64	-.07
Target goal value	0.59	0.03	17.42***	.60
Part. power × Target goal value	-0.17	0.07	2.38*	-.14

^a There is no consensus among quantitative scientists about what degrees of freedom should be in this type of analysis. It is therefore not possible to provide specific *p*-values. However, given our sample size for this and all subsequent studies, we can assume that:

† a *t*-statistic between 1.7 and 2 is marginally significant,

* a *t*-statistic above 2 is significant at $p < .05$,

** a *t*-statistic above 2.65 is significant at $p < .01$, and

*** a *t*-statistic above 3.4 is significant at $p < .001$

Table 4 – Regression analyses testing partner effects (Study 5)

Predictor	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	β
(Constant)	3.88	0.05	73.32***	
Target's felt power	0.06	0.08	0.79	.02
Perceived target power	-0.04	0.08	0.46	-.02
Target goal value	0.51	0.03	14.56***	.52
Felt power \times value	0.20	0.08	2.67**	.17
Perceived power \times value	0.002	0.07	0.03	.002

** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

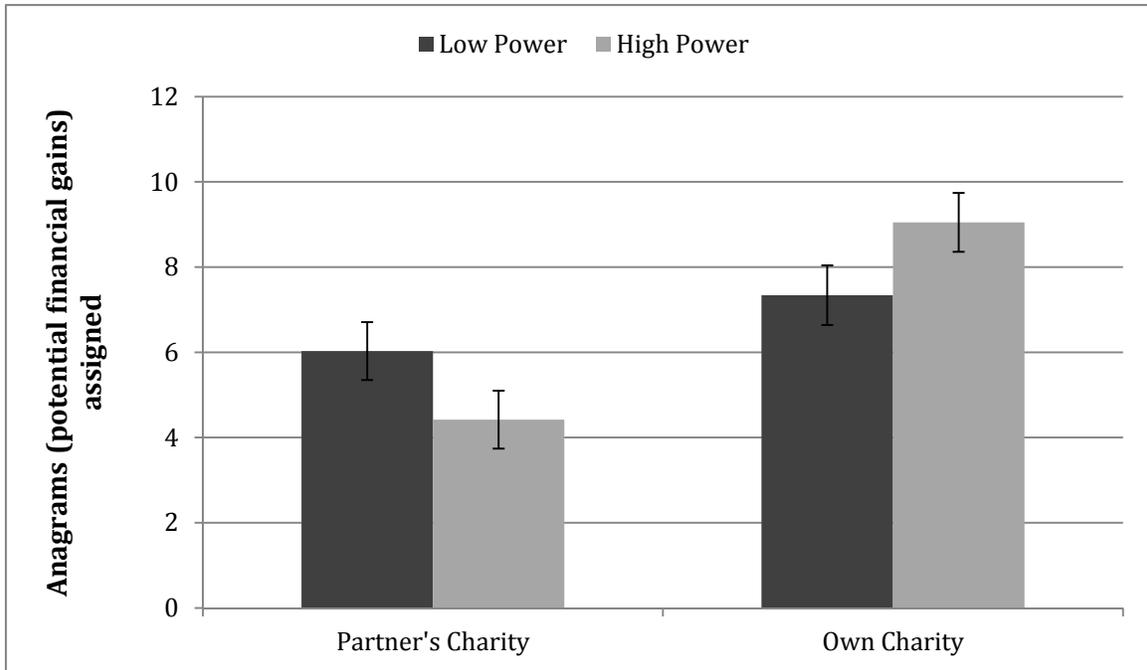


Figure 1. Number of anagrams participants assigned to their own charity and to their partner's charity, as a function of relationship-specific power; Study 2

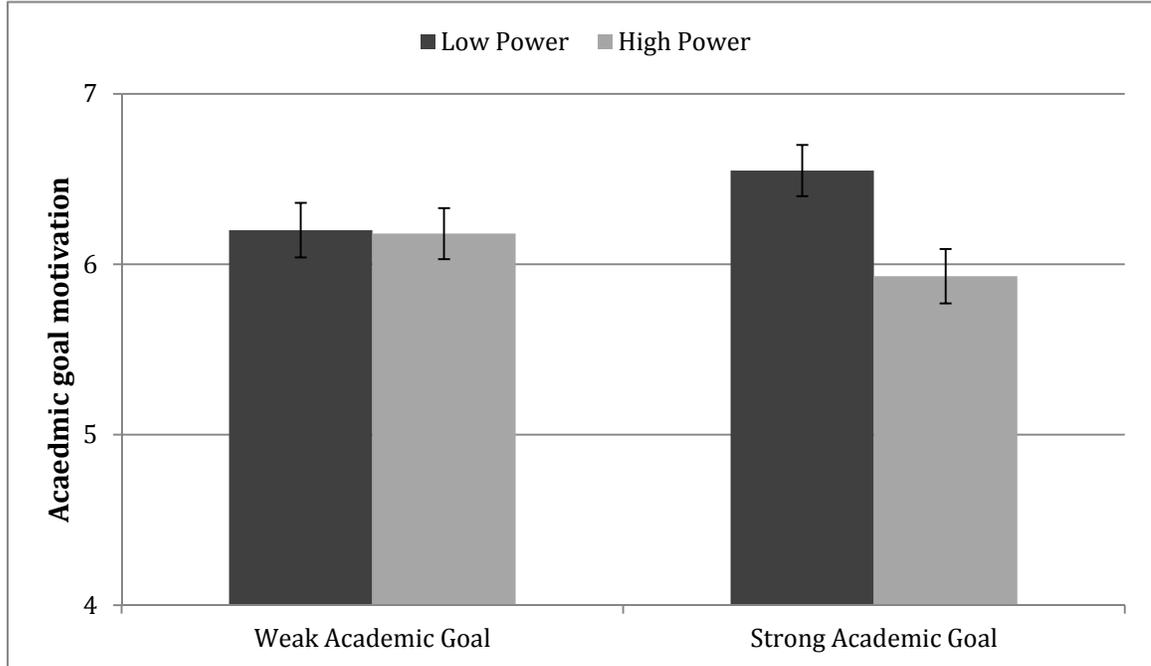


Figure 2. Strength of academic goals reported by participants who imagined their partner holding an academic goal versus engaging in academic behavior, as a function of relationship-specific power; Study 3

In this task, you will make various decisions about how money will be allocated between you and another person.

All of our participants will make these decisions, but each day we will randomly assign half the participants to be the decision-makers, and half to be the targets.

If you are assigned to be a decision-maker, you will earn the amount of money you allocated to yourself; if you are assigned to be a target, you will earn the amount of money another person chose to allocate to the “other person” in this task.

In other words, the choices you make can influence both how much money you earn, as well as how much money another person earns.

Again: This task will ACTUALLY contribute to your payout at the end of the experiment (although it will take us a few days to process everything, so you won't receive the money immediately)

Figure 3. Task instructions for Study 4

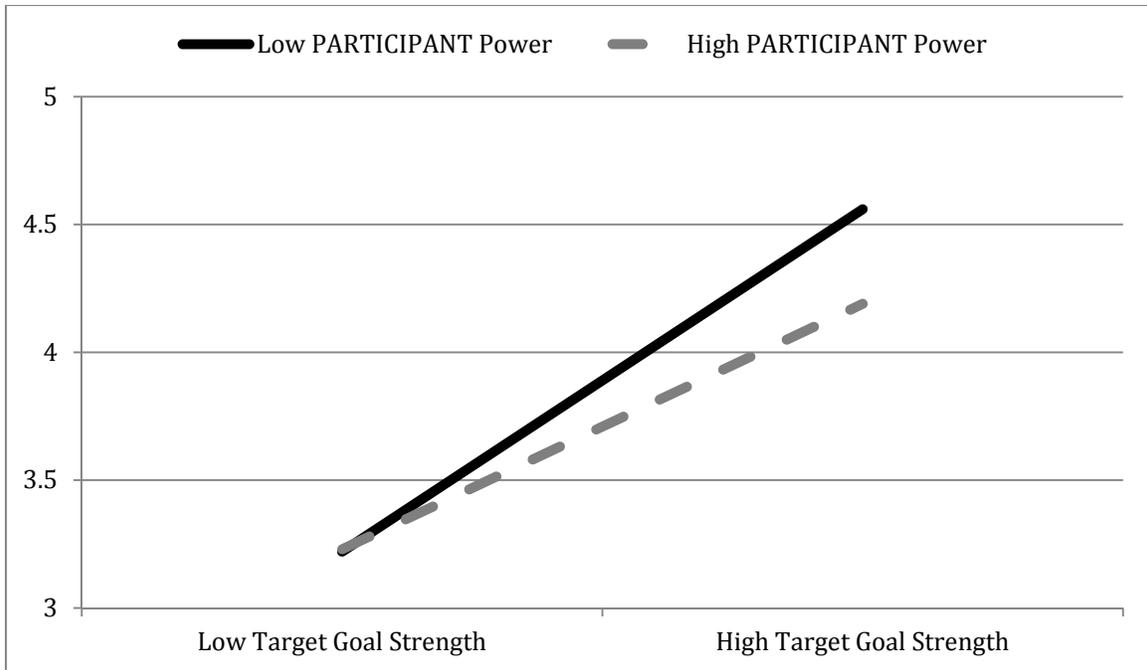


Figure 4. Ratings of feeling academically motivated by targets, as a function of perceptions that the target holds strong academic goals, and participant power; Study 5

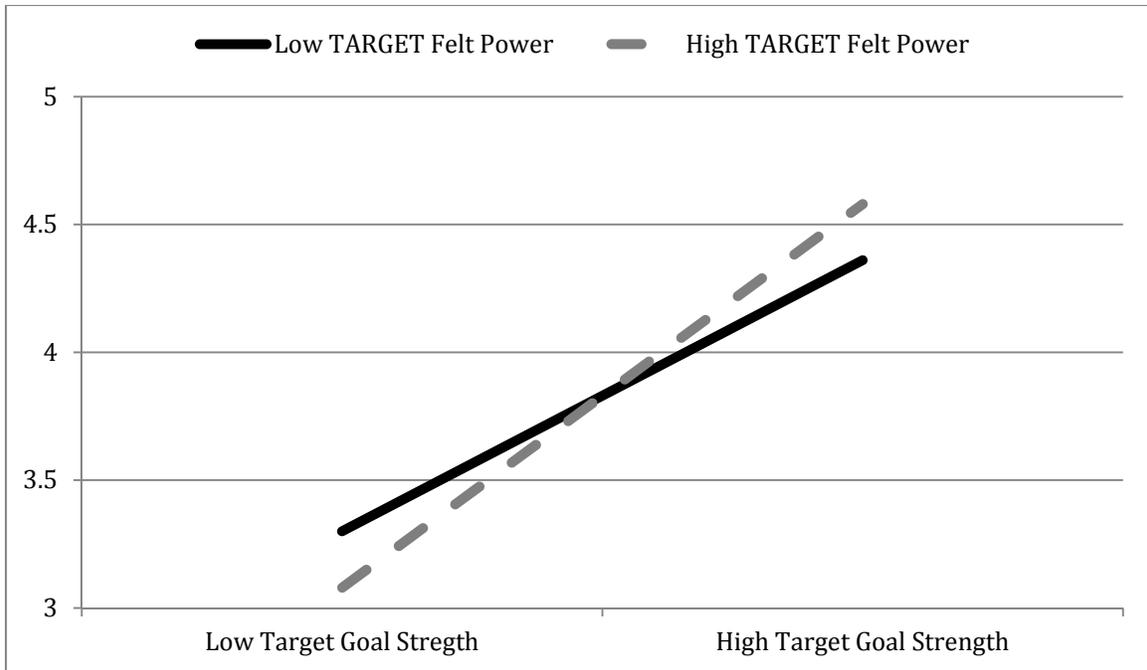


Figure 5. Ratings of feeling academically motivated by targets, as a function of perceptions that the target holds strong academic goals, and target power; Study 5

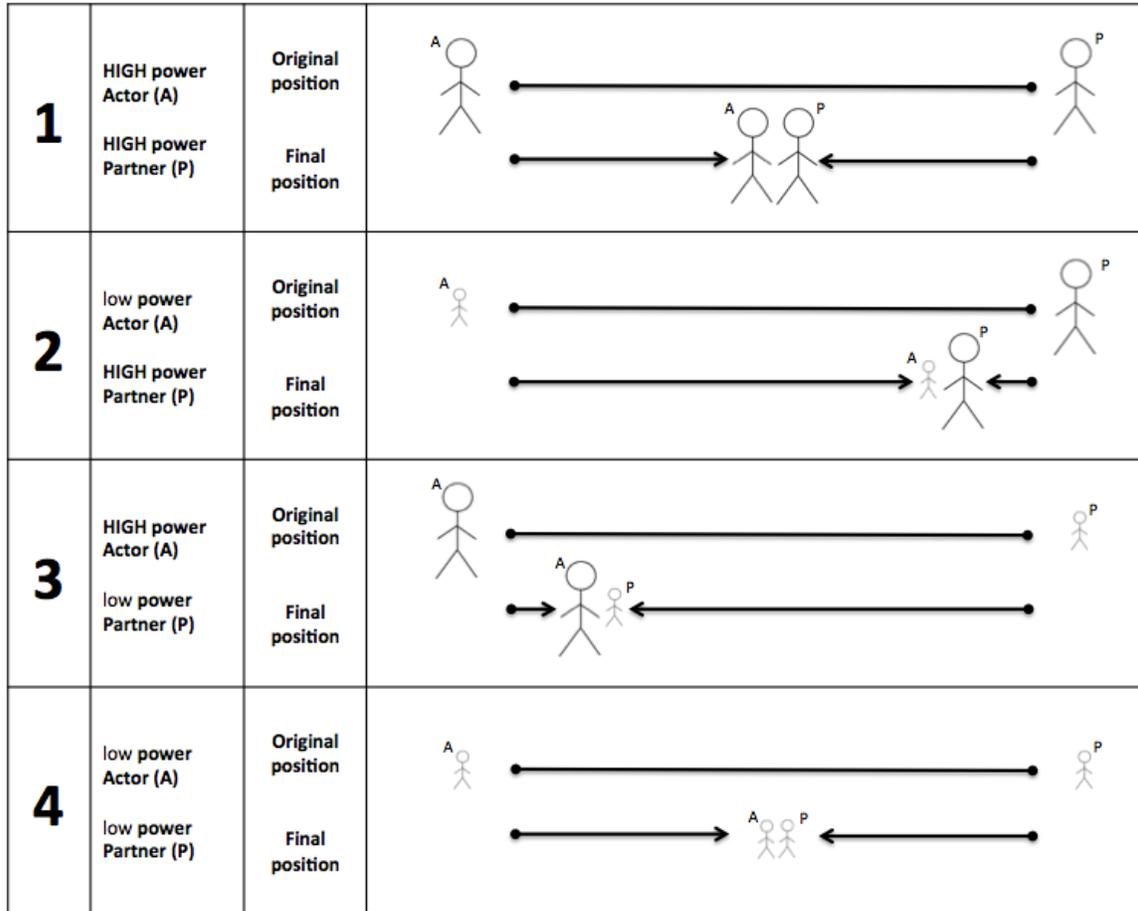


Figure 6. Conceptual representation of a gravitational metaphor for the effects of power on goal transfer between partners

Appendix
 Full set of anagrams (Study 2)
 (bolded anagrams were unsolvable)

LAYPS	MAHRE	ABONCE	TSVREO	DERHSO	OLTIMPA	MATIL
OYABU	TEHSO	EPCRIY	ULTHES	ESHVLO	OSAFREW	GSOTE
IECLR	HWSRE	DBERUM	MELIHU	OGTYZE	VYTRELO	IESCH
HRDIT	ROCNA	GIRLUN	SNIYTA	STAIMD	TOMIDVE	LAHMC
ASNLT	JUYP	DYLIEW	TYFISH	UECHNQ	WYDSHOA	TLIBE
DLSEI	NDRKA	ADMVPE	WEFOUL	UTCBAD	JURALON	CLIED
HKACW	EBGNA	NEPOGI	INTYGO	CNEOMI	ETLDGIH	RDAOEN
NYSOE	OUIPM	IUYTDN	SRMGOA	BUEYOD	KNGCITU	EMTPOD
SEIHR	MECIL	OLGNUE	OPRUET	LBERID	DNEMUAR	ADRSOP
ADRIN	RYNAI	EARSTF	UDOREV	LRASDO	NSGRTAI	IFBCUR
AHWTE	PUSML	ENCDHR	SERONI	AERPDPW	GIKNASL	MOTENI
ITFNA	HAESM	KINTHG	SMNORA	UBLONT	ISDMTEL	ARPITO
RBHTO	HNCAL	OCENDL	EHCSKT	ERKOST	MEDPOCL	VRATEM
WEAFR	LTOYZ	MNYLAE	TSIYCM	FEISHD	SEAOUCR	PUNLIT
ASTID	ONUHD	ITCUAY	SRIEHN	TAFRUL	KLCTDIE	OEDMSTA
EADRY	BHIRC	ROCDSE	ISDEWP	PETLIR	WYLERID	FRADHLE