ALL IS FAIR IN LOVE AND GOAL PURSUIT: EXPLORING DYADS' TRANSITION FROM COMMUNAL ORIENTATION TO EXCHANGE ORIENTATION

by

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(Under the Direction of Michelle vanDellen)

ABSTRACT

Interdependent people pursue many goals, both for themselves and for each other. I hypothesized that although people in close relationships are typically communally oriented, concurrently pursuing the same goal would shift their orientation toward one of exchange (CET). In the first study, I tested whether thinking about one's close other (versus their shared goal) would interact with goal difficulty to predict CET. A significant interaction emerged such that participants who thought about their close other and whose goals were difficult to pursue shifted from communal toward exchange orientation. In the second study, I manipulated goal difficulty and goal sharing status. Participants did not significantly change their relationship orientation as a result of this manipulation. Taken together, people experience CET when thinking about their close other in the context of goal pursuit, rather than thinking about aspects of their goal. This transition has implications for close relationship partners' continued self-regulation.

INDEX WORDS: Close relationships, self-regulation, relationship orientations

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For people who are pursuing difficult goals, finding a partner with whom to pursue the goal seems to be the way to go. From study buddies to gym friends to commercial group programs, two (or more) people concurrently striving for the same aspiration can be a promising strategy for effective self-regulation. Knowing another person is pursuing the same goal reduces one's uncertainty about goal progress and signals that social support and resources are available when needed (Huang, Broniarczyk, Zhang, & Beruchashvili, 2015). In turn, the feeling of being in the same boat as one another encourages goal progress (Shteynberg & Galinsky, 2011).

Though abundant in personal narratives, interpersonal influences on people's goals have been on the outskirts of classic self-regulation research. Recently, though, researchers suggest people's social environment shapes their goal initiation, goal operation, and goal monitoring (Fitzsimons & Finkel, 2010). A novel theory *Transactive Goal Dynamics* (*TGD*) posits that the more interdependent people are, the more appropriate it is to consider them as subunits of one self-regulating system (*TGD System*) that sets, pursues, and monitors the outcomes of their goals (Fitzsimons, Finkel, & vanDellen, 2015). The system members may strive after many and different types of goals, for themselves, for their partner, and for the system, and often do so in the same time span. When two people are concurrently pursuing the same goal outcome for themselves, they are pursuing a *parallel self-oriented goal* (*PSO goal*; Fitzsimons et al., 2015).

Being a member of a TGD System may be incredibly effective for self-regulation. But, pursuing a PSO goal together may change the way people think about their relationship with

their TGD System partner. Typically, people who are close with one another (or desire a close relationship) adhere to communal norms, the giving of benefit without expectation of immediate and similar return of benefit, and not exchange norms, the giving of benefit with expectation of immediate and similar return of benefit ("A 'benefit' can be anything a person can choose to give to another person that is of use to the person receiving it"; Clark & Mills, 1979, p. 12). I suggest, however, that when people are focused on achieving their PSO goal, especially if it's difficult to pursue, they will expect their goal inputs (i.e., goal-pursuit efforts) and outcomes to be similar to each other's. As a byproduct of seeking equity, I hypothesize TGD System members' relationship orientation shifts from that of communion to one of exchange.

Behavioral Reciprocity Norms in Close Relationships

In an exchange relationship, dyads have a tit-for-tat expectation that needs to be satisfied relatively immediately—those who benefit others expect a quick return of equal value (Clark & Mills, 1979). It would be inappropriate to not promptly provide each other compensatory benefit to offset costs. Exchange orientation (first introduced by Murstein, Cerreto, & MacDonald, 1977) is a person's degree of expectation of reciprocal exchange; a person feels uncomfortable if he receives a benefit for which he cannot readily return. He also expects the other person in the relationship to feel similarly and adhere to the same rules (van Yperen & Buunk, 1990).

In close relationships, members typically recognize and respond to one another's needs without an expectation of immediate reciprocity of benefit. Intimate partners still keep track of the effort they input, but they differ from those who are strangers or acquaintances in that they expect varying benefits over time (Clark, 1981). These relationships are communal relationships. And, there are some people who are likely to seek these relationships and generally act according to communal norms; they are communally oriented (Clark, Ouellette, Powell, & Milberg, 1987).

People who are high in communal orientation have higher self-esteem and relationship satisfaction than those who are low in communal orientation (Le, Impett, Kogan, Webster, & Cheng, 2013). They are also more likely to help strangers (Clark et al., 1987), claim fault in a failed joint task (Williamson & Clark, 1989), and experience less burnout in caregiver roles (van Yperen, Buunk, & Shaufeli, 1992). Married partners perceive communal norms as an ideal way to form and maintain a positive relationship (Grote & Clark, 1998). Though ideal, researchers recognize that people may strive but fail to consistently follow these social rules (Grote & Clark, 1998). Instead, either due to circumstances, depletion, or even preference (Clark & Jordan, 2002; Clark & Mills, 2012), people who would otherwise take a communal orientation toward their relationship may shift to follow the norms of exchange relationships.

Regardless of relationship orientation, people are happiest in their relationships when their outcomes outweigh their inputs and when relationship partners' ratios of inputs to outcomes are relatively equal (Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973). People may not have checks-and-balances record books, but they typically behave in ways that are fair and will leave relationships that are unfair (Miller, Perlman, & Brehm, 2007). In fact, people are unhappy both when they are under-benefitted and, surprisingly, over-benefitted from their relationships (Miller et al., 2007; Uehara, 1995; Walster et al., 1973). Relationships that are perceived as fair are more enjoyable and longer lasting than their unfair counterparts (Hatfield, Traupmann, Sprecher, Utne, & Hay, 1985). If someone is disproportionately giving or receiving more benefit than his or her partner, he or she attempts to restore the equity between their contributions and receipts. People may attempt to correct this imbalance by restoring *actual equity* by changing their or their partner's contributions or outcomes. They may restore *psychological equity* by changing their perceptions of the relationship and convincing themselves that the relationship is equitable. Or, they may

abandon the relationship (Miller et al., 2007). As long as people have relatively equal ratios of contribution (costs) to beneficial outcome (rewards), they experience proportional justice and will likely continue their relationship (Miller et al., 2007; Sprecher & Schwartz, 1994).

Though people have preferences for how they interpersonally give and take benefits (relationship orientations), they understand and may employ different social norms in response to certain events. Clark and Jordan (2002, p. 6) suggested, "It is possible to have both a communal and exchange relationship with the same partner, dependent on the costs involved in providing benefits." There is some evidence to suggest that people will transition from communal to exchange orientation and perhaps back again, but support is limited. For instance, romantic relationship partners, who frequently follow communal norms, shift their behaviors to reflect an exchange relationship when they become dissatisfied in their partnership, which, in turn, promotes distress (Clark & Jordan, 2002; Grote & Clark, 1998, 2001; Miller et al., 2007). Partners may shift their focus back to communal norms as stressors dissipate; if the stressors do not subside, or partners feel that communal norms are just too unrealistic to uphold, partners may never truly return to a communal relationship state (Clark & Jordan, 2002).

Equity Emerges from Goal Pursuit

When two people set goals together, they implicitly coordinate their goal pursuits (Shteynberg & Galinsky, 2011). However, individuals vary in their self-regulation patterns, so TGD System members may struggle to stay in sync with each other's goal-related efforts. Interdependent people's goal pursuits and outcomes are largely influenced by each other's affect, degree of power and control, commitment, and responsiveness (Fitzsimons et al., 2015; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Because of their interdependency, TGD System members are likely to notice and respond to the progress their partners are or are not making

toward their set goals. The observation of another's goal-pursuit progress results in the perception of that person's commitment to the goal, with little or no progress interpreted as low goal commitment (vanDellen, Boyd, Ranby, & Beam, 2016). If one member of the TGD System perceives the other as having low commitment to their PSO goal, he or she will likely attempt to restore equity in this goal domain between the two of them.

The Present Studies

In the present studies, I explored the possibility that active goal pursuits may lead to a brief communal-to-exchange transition (CET) from communal orientation to exchange orientation in interdependent dyadic TGD Systems (i.e., close friends and romantic partners). I hypothesized when two members of a TGD System are pursuing a PSO goal, if this PSO goal is made salient they will experience CET. This transition from communal orientation to exchange orientation will be stronger for people whose PSO goal is difficult (Hypothesis 1). In addition, I proposed two personal characteristics, trait self-control and entitlement, would be significantly related to CET, such that people high in trait self-control would experience weaker CET than people low in self-control, and people high in entitlement would experience stronger CET than people low in entitlement (Hypothesis 2).

The purpose of Study 1 was to find support of the existence of CET in dyadic TGD Systems. I operationalized CET as the difference in average communal orientation and exchange orientation scores, specifically with a smaller difference when subtracting exchange orientation scores from communal orientation scores. Further, I tested the effect of participants' perceived PSO goal difficulty on the relationship between PSO goal salience and CET. Altogether, I expected PSO goal salience to cause CET and be moderated by PSO goal difficulty.

The intent of Study 2 was to replicate Study 1's result of CET in dyadic TGD Systems, while manipulating goal difficulty and PSO goal status (whether or not the goal was shared) in a factorial design. CET was again operationalized as the difference in average communal orientation and exchange orientation scores, specifically with a smaller difference when subtracting exchange orientation scores from communal orientation scores. Also, I tested how personal characteristics, specifically trait self-control and entitlement, affected the relationships between goal difficulty, PSO goal status, and CET. Altogether, I proposed goal difficulty and PSO goal status to interact to predict CET and be moderated by trait self-control and by entitlement.

CHAPTER 2

STUDY 1

I investigated TGD system members' transition from communal orientation to exchange orientation (CET). Specifically, Study 1 evaluated TGD System members' shift from adherence to communal norms to exchange norms when they are thinking about a parallel self-oriented (PSO) goal versus thinking about their TGD System partner. I also tested participants' perceived PSO goal difficulty as a moderator of this effect. Little is known about the transitional properties (if any) of these relationship orientations. I suggest because people can employ either relationship orientation with the same target, a TGD System member will report adherence to global communal norms with his or her TGD partner while increasing their exchange orientation when their goal is shared and difficult to pursue.

Method

Participants.

Participants were 178 undergraduate students who were members of a research participation pool of a large university in the United States. They self-selected to participate in the study and were conferred partial course credit for participation. Three participants' cases were omitted from analyses because they did not give permission for their completed responses to be used for this study, leaving the total sample at 175 participants (112 female). Participants' average age was 19.5 years (SD = 1.49 years) and ranged from 18 to 29 years. Participants reported their races as African American (17.1%), Asian American (5.1%), Caucasian (70.3%), Hispanic (4.6%), Native American (.6%), and Other (5.7%).

Procedure.

Participants came into the lab space and filled out a writing prompt (Appendix A) for a maximum of three minutes. After they completed the writing prompt, one research assistant interviewed them individually (following a script; Appendix B) in a private room to discuss their responses on their writing prompt and to verify their responses met the inclusion criteria. After the research assistant interviewed participants individually, the participants were seated at a computer separated by cubicle dividers in another lab space. The research assistant then typed in the participants' discussed responses into the first page of the survey. Using survey software, participants' answers on their writing prompt (their named parallel self-oriented goal and the friend [or romantic partner] that was also pursuing that goal) were pipe-texted throughout the survey.

All participants responded to questions regarding goal-pursuit difficulty, goal importance, closeness to their named friend, and trait self-control. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of two conditions: PSO Goal Salience condition or TGD System Salience condition. Participants assigned to the PSO Goal Salience condition were asked to write about details of their goal and their efforts to achieve their goal; participants assigned to the TGD System Salience condition were asked to write about details of their friend and the last time they visited with their friend. Then all participants were asked to read and imagine themselves in four scenarios that each depicted an interaction with their friend that would typically require adherence to communal norms (communal interactions; Bartz & Lydon, 2008). Following each scenario, the participants responded to questions of hypothetical affect, probability of scenario actually happening in reality, the probability of their intention to return their friend's favor, how much time they would allow to pass before returning the favor, and the extent to which this

scenario reflects the nature of their current relationship with their friend. Then all participants filled out questionnaires regarding their communal orientation and their exchange orientation, counterbalanced. Last, participants indicated their demographic information and were debriefed.

Measures.

Parallel Self-Oriented Goal Measures.

PSO Goal Difficulty. Two items assessed participants' perceived PSO goal difficulty for both themselves and for their friend: "How difficult is it for you to pursue this goal?" and "How difficult is it for your friend to pursue this goal?" Participants responded on a 1 (*Extremely easy*) to 5 (*Extremely difficult*) scale.

PSO Goal Importance. Four items assessed participants' perceived PSO goal importance for both themselves and for their friend: "How important do you think it is for you to achieve this goal?" "How important does your friend think it is for him/her to achieve this goal?" "How important do you think it is for your friend to achieve this goal?" "How important does your friend think it is for you to achieve this goal?" Participants responded on a 1 (*Not at all important*) to 5 (*Extremely important*) scale.

TGD System Partner Measure.

Closeness. One item assessed participants' perceived closeness to their named friend. Participants responded by choosing a picture that best represents the closeness of their friend (other) to themselves (self); the pictures are diagrams of two circles, one representing the *self* and one representing the *other*, that gradually increase their overlap. The amount the two circles overlap (1 = *No overlap* to 7 = *Almost complete overlap*) represents participants' perceived closeness to their friend (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992).

Individual Differences Measure.

Brief Trait Self-Control Scale. Thirteen items assessed participants' trait self-control (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). Participants responded on a 1 (*Not at all like me*) to 5 (*Very much like me*) scale. Items included questions like "I am good at resisting temptation" and "I often act without thinking through all the alternatives" (reverse scored). This measure was found reliable, $\alpha = .85$.

Communal Interactions Measures.

Negative Affect. Participants rated how they would feel in response to four communal interaction scenarios (Bartz & Lydon, 2008). Specifically, participants were asked about negative feelings, including annoyance, anger, uncertainty, anxiousness, confidence (reverse scored), happiness (reverse scored) and uneasiness. They rated all 17 items on a 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Extremely*) scale. This measure was found reliable, $\alpha = .82$.

Probability of Friend Performing Scenario Behavior. One item repeated after two different scenarios asked participants to rate the probability that their friend would perform the behavior depicted in each scenario on a scale of 0 to 100 percent ($r = .21$).

Probability of Participant Returning Scenario Favor. One item repeated after three different scenarios asked participants the probability they would feel the need to do something for their friend on another occasion with the explicit intention of reciprocating the favor they just received ($\alpha = .68$).

Time Passed Before Participant Returns Favor. One item repeated after three different scenarios asked participants to write how much time, in days, they would feel comfortable letting pass before reciprocating the favor they received from their friend ($\alpha = .64$). Their responses ranged from 0 days to 426 days.

Nature of Friendship. One item repeated after every scenario measured the extent to which participants would feel that each scenario would reflect the overall nature of their relationship with their friend if the scenarios were reversed such that the participant performed a favor and the friend did not reciprocate (α = .62). Participants responded with either a 1 (*It would say a lot about our relationship*), a 2 (*It would say a little about our relationship*), or a 3 (*It would say nothing about our relationship*).

Communal and Exchange Orientation Measures.

Communal Orientation. Eight items (α = .73) of the Revised Communal Orientation Scale (Clark et al., 1987; Peterson, 2001) assessed participants' communal orientation in their relationship with their friend. Items included "When making a decision, I take my friend's needs into account, even if he/she should sometimes neglect or forget to take my needs into account" and "I usually try to help my friend solve his or her problems, without expecting anything in return."

Exchange Orientation. Eleven items (α = .79) of the Revised Exchange Orientation Scale (Murstein, Wadlin, & Bond, 1987; Peterson, 2001) assessed participants' exchange orientation in their relationship with their friend. Items included "If my friend were to do a chore for me (pick up my mail, help me move apartments, etc.), I would feel that I should repay such work in some way" and "If I take my friend out for dinner, I expect him or her to do the same for me sometime."

Results

To perform a randomization check, I conducted a *t*-test to evaluate the effect of Condition on Goal Difficulty. I then performed moderation analyses using regression (Hayes, 2013) to test the moderating effects of Goal Difficulty on the relationships between Condition and Exchange

Orientation and Communal Orientation. I then decomposed the significant interaction of Condition and Goal Difficulty on Exchange Orientation by evaluating the effect of Condition on Exchange Orientation at different values of Goal Difficulty, specifically at the mean and one standard deviation above and below the mean (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

There were no significant differences in Goal Difficulty, $t(173) = -0.37$, $p = .72$, between participants who were in the PSO Goal Salience condition ($M = 3.49$, $SD = .88$) and participants who were in the TGD System Salience condition ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .98$), suggesting successful randomization.

I analyzed the interaction between Condition and Goal Difficulty on Communal Orientation and Exchange Orientation separately. There was not a significant interaction of Condition and Goal Difficulty on Communal Orientation, $F(1,170) = 0.44$, $p = .51$. But, there was a significant interaction of Condition and Goal Difficulty on Exchange Orientation, $F(1,171) = 12.69$, $p < .001$. I then conducted moderation analyses using regression to evaluate the moderating effect of Goal Difficulty on the relationship between Condition and Exchange Orientation at different values of Goal Difficulty (Hayes, 2013; Figure 1). Among participants who rated their PSO Goal Difficulty as relatively low (-1*SD*), participants in the TGD System Salience condition had significantly lower Exchange Orientation than participants in the PSO Goal Salience condition, $b = -0.55$, $t(171) = -2.86$, $p < .005$. Among participants who rated their Goal Difficulty as relatively high (+1*SD*), participants in the TGD System Salience condition had significantly higher Exchange Orientation than participants in the PSO Goal Salience condition, $b = 0.42$, $t(171) = 2.23$, $p < .03$.

Discussion

Results from Study 1 suggest dyadic TGD System members' relationship orientations are transitional—contingent on the goal-related context, members shift their expectations about the ways in which to trade benefits with each other. Though the results were in the opposite direction of my prediction (i.e., when people think about their PSO Goal they'll be more exchange oriented than when they think about their TGD System), this is the first study to suggest and test the hypothesis that relationship orientations are transitional during self-regulation processes. If people are thinking about their TGD System partner in the context of an easy PSO goal, they are likely to be low in exchange orientation. But, if people are thinking about their TGD System partner in the context of a difficult PSO goal, they are likely to be high in exchange orientation. CET occurred when the participants' close relationship with their TGD System partner, which is typically characterized by high communal orientation and low exchange orientation, became characterized by both high communal and high exchange orientation.

A transition into an exchange-oriented mindset when thinking about pursuing a difficult PSO goal with a TGD System partner may be advantageous for a person's self-regulation. When in an exchange mindset, a person more readily attends to the equity between benefits given and received from each party. Thus, if two people have the same goal for themselves, and the goal is difficult for them to pursue, they are more likely to compare their PSO-goal-specific progress and outcomes to each other and desire relatively equal benefits. For example, if Tracy and Stephen are both trying to make a good grade in Biology and if Tracy provided Stephen with notes that helped him make an 'A' on the last quiz, she is likely to expect Stephen to repay her with some equally instrumental benefit. So, when thinking about her relationship with Stephen in

the context of their PSO goal, Tracy increases her exchange orientation perhaps to justify her expectations of Stephen helping her with their goal in return, which may ultimately promote further goal progress than if she did not expect reciprocal help. However, there may be a cost to seeing her relationship with Stephen through exchange-oriented lenses. If Tracy sees Stephen subsequently slacking off in studying, she may feel she deserves a similar break. If she is in an exchange-oriented mindset, Tracy may calibrate her own self-regulatory efforts with Stephen's goal-related behavior. In this scenario, Tracy's feeling of deserving a break in response to Stephen's lapse in goal pursuit will ultimately slow down her own PSO goal progress.

CHAPTER 3

STUDY 2

I conducted Study 2 to address some limitations in the first study and to further explore CET in dyadic TGD Systems. In Study 1, all participants answered questions about their PSO goal, including a brief description, difficulty, and importance, before being randomly assigned to condition, which may have uniformly increased PSO goal salience. Therefore, in Study 2, participants' Goal Difficulty and Goal Sharing were manipulated in a 2x2 factorial design. Further, Study 2 measured individual differences including trait entitlement and trait self-control to explore relationships between TGD system members' personal characteristics and CET.

Method

Participants.

Participants were 405 undergraduate students who were members of a research participation pool of a large university in the United States. They self-selected to participate in the study and were conferred partial course credit for participation. Four participants' cases were omitted from analyses because they did not give permission for their completed responses to be used for this study. Without these cases, the total sample was 401 participants. The majority of participants identified as female (323); three did not identify their sex, and 75 identified as male. Participants' average age was 18.66 years (*SD* = 1.24 years) and ranged from 17 to 29 years. Participants reported their races as African American (13.25%), Asian American (12.75%), Caucasian (62.25%), Hispanic (3.0%), Multiracial (3.25%), Native American (.25%), and Other (5.25%).

Procedure.

Participants came into the lab space and filled out a writing prompt (see Appendix C) for a maximum of three minutes. After they completed the writing prompt, one research assistant interviewed them individually (following a script; see Appendix D) in a private room to verify their responses met the inclusion criteria. After the interview, the research assistant sat the participants down at a computer separated by cubicle dividers in another lab space. The research assistant recorded the participants' responses and entered them into the computer. The participant then typed the name of the person with whom they shared two of the goals into the survey. Using survey software, participants' answers on their writing prompt were pipe-texted throughout the survey.

All participants responded to a questionnaire about entitlement. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of four conditions from the 2(Easy Goal or Difficult Goal) x 2(Non-shared Goal or Shared Goal) factorial design: (1) Easy:Non-Shared, regarding a goal that's easy to pursue that the participant doesn't share with a friend, (2) Difficult:Non-Shared, regarding a goal that's difficult to pursue that the participant doesn't share with a friend, (3) Easy:Shared, regarding a goal that's easy to pursue that the participant shares with a friend, or (4) Difficult:Shared, regarding a goal that's difficult to pursue that the participant shares with a friend. These four conditions corresponded to the participants' provided goals during the interview. Regardless of condition, participants were asked to type their responses to the following questions about their goal: *What motivates you to pursue this goal? When did you start pursuing this goal? How do you pursue this goal? How important is it to you that you achieve this goal? When was the last time you did something that made progress toward this goal?* If

participants were in one of the conditions that asked about a shared goal, they were also asked: *When was the last time [name of friend] did something that made progress toward this goal?*

Then all participants filled out questionnaires regarding their communal orientation and their exchange orientation, counterbalanced. Next they were asked to fill out questionnaires about goal difficulty, goal importance, and the frequency of conversation with their named friend regarding all four of their listed goals. The participants also reported on their state feelings of shame and guilt, their trait self-control, and filled out a short personality scale. Lastly, participants indicated their demographic information and were debriefed.

Measures.

Goal Measures.

Goal Difficulty. For the two goals that were not shared, one item assessed participants' perceived goal difficulty. For the two goals that were shared, two items assessed participants' perceived goal difficulty for both themselves and for their friend. Questions included: "How difficult is it for you to pursue this goal?" and "How difficult is it for your friend to pursue this goal?" Participants responded on a 1 (*Extremely easy*) to 5 (*Extremely difficult*) scale.

Goal Importance. For the two goals that were not shared, one item assessed participants' perceived goal importance. For the two goals that were shared, four items assessed participants' perceived goal importance for both themselves and for their friend. Questions included: "How important do you think it is for you to achieve this goal?" "How important does your friend think it is for him/her to achieve this goal?" "How important do you think it is for your friend to achieve this goal?" "How important does your friend think it is for you to achieve this goal?" Participants responded on a 1 (*Not at all important*) to 5 (*Extremely important*) scale.

Conversations about Goals. One item measured participants' perceived frequency of conversation with their friend regarding each of their named goals (4 items in total). Participants responded on a 1 (*We don't talk about it*) to 4 (*We talk about it often*) scale.

Individual Differences Measures.

Psychological Entitlement Scale. Nine items assessed participants' psychological entitlement (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004). Participants responded on a 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*) scale. Items included questions like "Things should go my way" and "I do not necessarily deserve special treatment" (reverse scored). This measure was found reliable, $\alpha = .84$.

State Shame and Guilt Scale. Fifteen items assessed participants' feelings of state shame and guilt (Marschall, Sanftner, & Tangney, 1994). Participants responded on a 1 (*Does not describe my feelings*) to 5 (*Clearly describes my feelings*) scale. Items included statements like "I feel tension about something I have done" and "I feel remorse, regret." This measure was found reliable, $\alpha = .88$.

Brief Trait Self-Control Scale. Thirteen items assessed participants' trait self-control (Tangney et al., 2004). Participants responded on a 1 (*Not at all like me*) to 5 (*Very much like me*) scale. Items included questions like "I am good at resisting temptation" and "I often act without thinking through all the alternatives" (reverse scored). This measure was found reliable, $\alpha = .83$.

Ten Item Personality Inventory. Ten items of paired traits assessed participants' personalities (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003). This scale measured the Five-Factor Model dimensions, extraversion ($r = .60$), agreeableness ($r = .19$), conscientiousness ($r = .33$), emotional stability ($r = .60$), and openness to experiences ($r = .25$).

Communal and Exchange Orientation Measures.

Communal Orientation. Eight items of the Revised Communal Orientation Scale (Clark et al., 1987; Peterson, 2001) assessed participants' communal orientation in their relationship with their friend. Items included "When making a decision, I take my friend's needs into account, even if he/she should sometimes neglect or forget to take my needs into account" and "I usually try to help my friend solve his or her problems, without expecting anything in return." This measure was found moderately reliable, $\alpha = .63$.

Exchange Orientation. Eleven items of the Revised Exchange Orientation Scale (Murstein et al., 1987; Peterson, 2001) assessed participants' exchange orientation in their relationship with their friend. Items included "If my friend were to do a chore for me (pick up my mail, help me move apartments, etc.), I would feel that I should repay such work in some way" and "If I take my friend out for dinner, I expect him or her to do the same for me sometime." This measure was found reliable, $\alpha = .77$.

Results

To perform a manipulation check of the Goal Difficulty condition, I conducted a *t*-test of the difference in participants' perceived goal difficulty between the two levels (Easy versus Difficult) of the Goal Difficulty condition. There was a significant difference in participants' perceived goal difficulty between participants who were in the Easy-goal level ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.00$) versus participants who were in the Difficult-goal level ($M = 4.11$, $SD = .80$), $t(399) = -17.40$, $p < .0001$, demonstrating a successful Goal Difficulty manipulation. To perform a randomization check, I conducted two two-way ANOVAs of Goal Difficulty and Goal Sharing predicting trait self-control and entitlement. There was not a significant interaction of Goal Difficulty and Goal Sharing on participants' trait self-control, $F(1,397) = 2.69$, $p = .10$, nor was

there a significant interaction of Goal Difficulty and Goal Sharing on participants' entitlement, $F(1,397) = 0.04$, $p = .84$, demonstrating adequate random assignment of participants with predicted influential traits.

I then conducted two two-way ANOVAs of Goal Difficulty and Goal Sharing predicting Communal Orientation and Exchange Orientation. There was not a significant interaction of Goal Difficulty and Goal Sharing predicting Communal Orientation, $F(1,397) = 0.00$, $p = .98$. There were no significant main effects of either Goal Difficulty, $F(1,398) = 0.60$, $p = .43$, or Goal Sharing, $F(1,398) = 0.40$, $p = .53$, on Communal Orientation. There was not a significant interaction of Goal Difficulty and Goal Sharing predicting Exchange Orientation, $F(1,397) = 3.04$, $p = .08$. There were no significant main effects of either Goal Difficulty, $F(1,398) = 1.63$, $p = .20$, or Goal Sharing, $F(1,398) = 2.56$, $p = .11$, on Exchange Orientation.

I then evaluated Self-Control's effect on the relationship between Goal Difficulty and Goal Sharing on Communal Orientation and on Exchange Orientation separately. There was not a significant three-way interaction of Goal Difficulty, Goal Sharing, and Self-Control predicting Communal Orientation, $F(1,393) = 0.85$, $p = .36$. There was not a significant three-way interaction of Goal Difficulty, Goal Sharing, and Self-Control predicting Exchange Orientation, $F(1,393) = 1.82$, $p = .18$. Next, I tested Entitlement's effect on the relationship between Goal Difficulty and Goal Sharing on Communal Orientation and on Exchange Orientation separately. There was not a significant three-way interaction of Goal Difficulty, Goal Sharing, and Entitlement predicting Communal Orientation, $F(1,393) = 0.77$, $p = .38$. There was not a significant three-way interaction of Goal Difficulty, Goal Sharing, and Entitlement predicting Exchange Orientation, $F(1,393) = 0.00$, $p = .97$. Lastly, I examined Frequency of Goal Conversation's effect on the relationship between Goal Difficulty and Goal Sharing on

Communal Orientation and on Exchange Orientation separately. There was not a significant three-way interaction of Goal Difficulty, Goal Sharing, and Frequency of Goal Conversation predicting Communal Orientation, $F(1,393) = 0.52$, $p = .47$. There was not a significant three-way interaction of Goal Difficulty, Goal Sharing, and Frequency of Goal Conversation predicting Exchange Orientation, $F(1,393) = 0.02$, $p = .88$.

Exploratory analyses found that Self-Control is strongly related to both Communal Orientation and Exchange Orientation, such that people who have high levels of trait self-control report significantly lower exchange orientation, $r = -.19$, $p < .0001$, and significantly higher communal orientation, $r = .14$, $p < .005$. These tests also revealed significant relationships between Entitlement and Communal Orientation and Exchange Orientation, such that people who have high levels of entitlement report significantly lower communal orientation, $r = -.23$, $p < .0001$, and significantly higher exchange orientation, $r = .27$, $p < .0001$.

Discussion

Results from Study 2 did not show the same effects as Study 1; there were no differences in communal or exchange orientation as a result of conditions. But, trait self-control and trait entitlement separately significantly predicted communal and exchange orientation. People with higher self-control reported higher communal orientation and lower exchange orientation, whereas people with higher entitlement reported higher exchange orientation and lower communal orientation. These findings suggest that future research include measures of personal characteristics, as traits may help predict people's tendencies to briefly transition from communal orientation to exchange orientation.

Study 2 may not have had a strong manipulation to optimally distinguish the four conditions, thus explaining the non-significant interaction between goal difficulty and goal

sharing. All participants filled out a writing prompt and were interviewed about each type of the four goals; perhaps the manipulation in the survey was not salient enough to afford participants' full attention to just one of these four conditions.

Another possibility for a lack of significant interaction is that Study 2's manipulation did not ask about the participants' TGD System member directly. Study 1's findings suggest that when people think about their TGD System in the context of difficult PSO goal pursuit, they transition from communal orientation to exchange orientation. Study 2's results demonstrate that failing to directly ask about participants' TGD System curbs people's switch from communal orientation to exchange orientation. Taken together, results from Studies 1 and 2 suggest when people attend to their TGD System in a difficult goal context—but not their goals in a system or individual context—they increase their exchange orientation and experience CET.

CHAPTER 4

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Being a member of a Transactive Goal Dynamics System (TGD System; Fitzsimons et al., 2015) may be an effective and efficient way to pursue goals, especially if pursuit is difficult. By being a part of an interdependent system, goal pursuers feel close to each other, certain about goal progress, and that they have access to interpersonal resources (Fitzsimons & Finkel, 2010; Huang et al., 2015). And, they typically do have such access. Close relationships are characterized by the giving of resources without expectation of immediate receipt of benefit (partners adhere to communal norms; Clark & Mills, 1979). When one's desired end state is tough to achieve and maintain, being able to draw upon another's helpful resources is invaluable. Both researchers and group-program leaders cite social support as an integral piece of the successful goal-pursuit process (Feeney, 2004; Huang et al., 2015). (For a plethora of stories about shared-goal-pursuit struggles and triumphs, look no further than the commercialized group program industry—why not capitalize on a naturally occurring process?). Though I agree that support is instrumental, I suggest that the giving of benefits to help another's self-regulation is a complex and dynamic process.

Consider when two people are concurrently pursuing similar goal outcomes for themselves, a parallel self-oriented goal (PSO goal; Fitzsimons et al., 2015). Imagine the ever-so-common goal of losing weight, say, twenty pounds. One partner is focusing on cardio exercises while the other is trying to manage a healthy diet. In a perfect world of self-regulation, each person would be able to successfully set, pursue, achieve, and maintain the outcomes of his

self-regulatory efforts on his own. In essence, each person would be able to keep his nose to the grindstone, blinders on, attending to the ultimate end state of being twenty pounds lighter. In the real world, however, people rarely don their blinders; instead, they often look to each other for self-regulation assistance. So, imagine that each partner has ample resources to aid the other in his or her pursuit. The person who ran for a couple miles wouldn't be too tired to help prepare a low-calorie dinner, and the partner who has eaten only granola and fruit all day is still peppy enough to compliment the runner's pace. Romantic relationship researchers consider this latter example the ideal way to maintain a happy relationship—the key here is that the dyad is following communal norms.

Researchers previously theorized that there is no room for exchange-norm adherence from close dyads because responsiveness should override the desire to account for benefits given and received (Kollock et al., 1994). However, there is evidence (albeit limited) to suggest that communally oriented people may use either set of norms, contingent on the perceived cost of providing benefits (Clark & Jordan, 2002). I suggest that maintaining such a high level of communion is incredibly costly and difficult to sustain for the duration of goal pursuit, especially long-term. Moreover, the cost of benefit provision is higher if a partner's goal is similar to one's own; having two people draw from the same resource pool may be literally and figuratively draining. And, there are likely times when one partner is supplying more benefit than the other; it can be costly to expend self-regulatory resources to help a close other's difficult goal pursuit without receiving a (perceived) fair share of aid. Taken together, I suggest that people in close relationships may find it challenging to uphold communal norms as they pursue goals that (a) are from the same domain, (b) are difficult to pursue, and (c) require long-term self-regulation. I propose that to alleviate this strain, close dyads are likely to transition from communal

orientation to exchange orientation (i.e., experience *CET*). CET is a way to correct for perceived inequity of goal-pursuit inputs and outcomes between TGD System members. By transitioning to an exchange orientation, the person may more accurately track regulatory costs and benefits, as well as signal that he or she expects reciprocity of benefit.

In the present work, I hypothesized that people's exchange orientation would increase as a result of difficult PSO goal pursuit. Indeed, Study 1's findings show an increase in participants' exchange orientation when they were thinking about their TGD System (versus aspects of their PSO goal) in the context of difficult PSO goal pursuit. Study 2 provided a nuance to Study 1's results: thinking about aspects of the goal itself, even if the goal is shared with a close other, was not enough to increase a person's exchange orientation. These preliminary results suggest that relationship orientations may be transitional and contingent upon certain self-regulation contexts.

Looking through the lens of CET provides an interesting view of previous research on perceptions of (in)equitable division of labor between romantic partners. As romantic couples transition into a new phase in life, like becoming first-time parents or cohabiting, they must readjust to new roles and responsibilities as well as maintain the old. These duties are often shared, tough to maintain, and require chronic attention: consider childcare and household chores. Research has time and again shown that partners' perceptions of the division of labor are inconsistent with one another and with reality (Austin Institute, 2014). Despite there being mismatched reports on quantity of work, it is *perceptions* of fairness that have an impact on both relationship satisfaction and happiness; in other words, as long as the partners view their contributions and outcomes as proportional to each other's, they are likely to continue as is (Walster et al., 1978). But what about times of perceived inequity? In addition to relationship conflict and psychological distress, I suggest that CET may be an outcome of perceived

unfairness. CET may be an attempt to restore equity in the labor division by signaling to the beneficiary that the benefactor expects similar contributions (Miller et al., 2007). CET may also occur in preparation for potentially unfair self-regulatory inputs and outcomes; perhaps people transition from communal orientation to exchange orientation to go into shared goal pursuit with the intention of better protecting their precious resources.

We propose CET underpins a broader self-regulatory event, one that we call *The Free Pass Effect.* The Free Pass Effect happens when a person who is a member of a dyadic TGD System learns about their TGD partner's lapse in goal pursuit and desires a similar break from pursuing their shared goal. But, taking a break because a close other lapsed in goal pursuit is not effective self-regulation nor is it expected in a close relationship. By shifting one's focus to an expectation of equal benefits, the goal pursuer is able to call into play the rules of equity in a domain that is typically characterized by communal responsiveness. Doing so provides a unique opportunity for justification of one's own break in the event of a TGD member's PSO-goal-pursuit lapse. Given the situation that one person has lapsed in goal pursuit and the other has noticed, what's fair? (One person keeps eating celery sticks after she learns her partner indulged in chocolate ice cream? Hardly. After all, they are supposed to be in this together.) It's possible that after learning of her partner's lapse, a person interprets her partner's indulgence as a need-based break from goal pursuit, responds by providing positive social support, and continues with her own goal pursuit. Though lovely, I suggest this communally-oriented reaction is unlikely.

Instead, I propose people in communal relationships may apply exchange norms in certain social contexts, including when two interdependent people are pursuing the same goal. If so, this transition provides a different lens through which to perceive the partner's lapse in goal pursuit. Under communal norms, a partner's break may be perceived as needed, and so an

individual may not take a break in response to the partner's lapse; however, under exchange norms, a partner's break may be perceived as a benefit taken, and so the individual may feel entitled to a similar benefit, or break from goal pursuit. With this new stance, the person may justify (perhaps solely to satisfy her immediate gratification desires) and will likely take a similar break, or receive a similar benefit. In this case, two wrongs won't get the system members closer to their goal—but it will make their pursuits feel fair.

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FIGURES

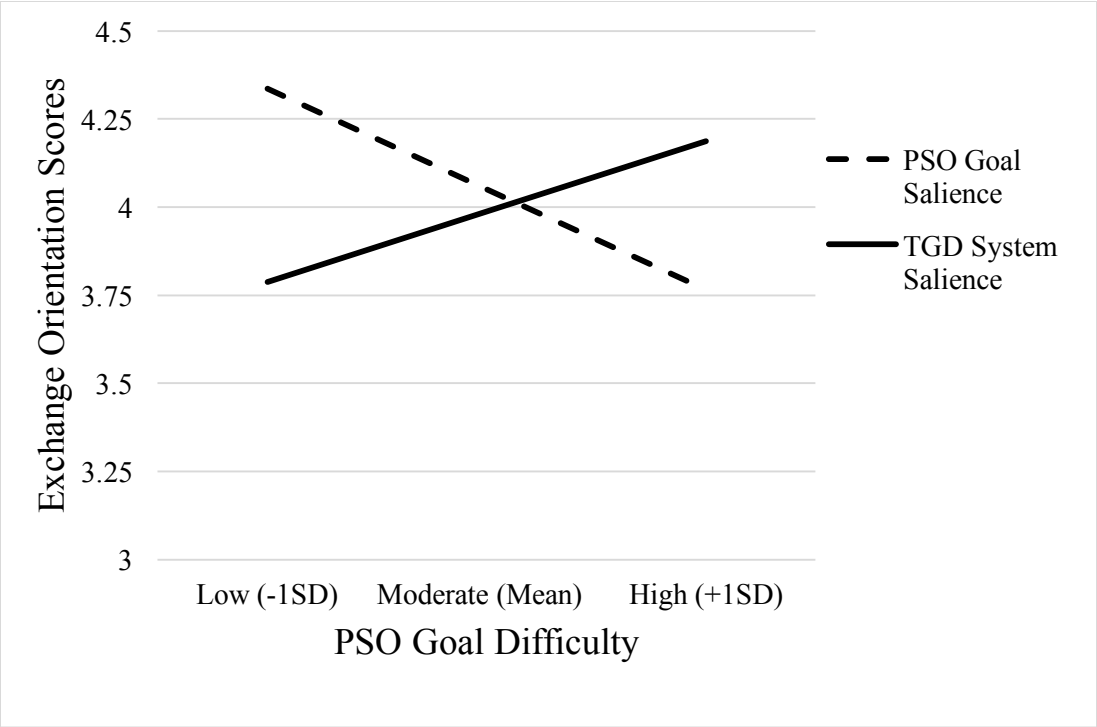

Figure 1. Exchange orientation scores predicted by goal difficulty and condition.

Appendix A

Study 1 Writing Prompt

Please read the prompt below and respond accordingly. Your answers will be kept confidential.

Personal goals are things that you would like to accomplish in your life. Please think about what goals are important to you right now. Think about your goals for your career, education, health, social life, personal growth, and enjoyment. To give you an idea of what we mean by personal goals, former participants have listed these goals:

"To become more active socially and make more friends"; "To be more productive at work"; "To get better grades"; "To be a more responsible parent"; "To stop gaining weight"; "To be less stressed"; "To stick to a fitness plan"; "To get my band going"; "To become fluent in Spanish"; "To spend more time with my friends"; "To spend more time with my children and spouse"; "To avoid working on the weekends"; "To keep an organized living space"; "To be more romantic with my significant other"

We're interested in goals you hope to make some progress on over the next few months, but not finish completely (that is, not a goal you'll finish next week). We're interested in your personal goals (that is, things you'd like to accomplish or change about yourself) and that you set for yourself (that is, not goals or benchmarks imposed on you by others, such as your parents or boss). Please take a few minutes to list some personal goals that you have for yourself for the next few months here:

Research Assistant Use Only:

Appendix B

Study 1 Research Assistant Script

After the participant signs the informed consent, one research assistant, who is blind to which condition the participant will be in, will hand them another clipboard with a writing prompt.

As soon as the participant finishes writing his/her responses, take one participant at a time into a room to have a private conversation.

Next, say:

"We'd like for you to think of a person who is close to you (it may be your romantic partner) and with whom you share one of these personal goals. In other words, both you and your friend (or romantic partner) are striving for the same personal goal; for example, both of you want "to make an "A" in the same class" or "to exercise four days a week." Is there a personal goal that you've listed that you know your friend (or romantic partner) is also trying to achieve for him/herself? If so, which goal is it?"

Hopefully, the participant will answer, "Yes!" and then show you the goal from his/her list. You need to make sure that this goal meets the following criteria:

- It's a personal goal—in other words, it's a goal that focuses on bettering that person or that person's position in life
- It's current—this needs to be a goal that they are currently pursuing, not having recently accomplished or "plan to get around to someday"
- It's shared—this goal needs to be the same goal for both the participant and the participant's friend

If the selected goal qualifies, please write it in the box on the writing-prompt paper. The participant is then ready to take the online survey. If there are two experimenters, please guide the participant back to the experimenter in the front office after saying:

"The survey will begin by asking you to type a goal that both you and your friend are currently pursuing. Please type the goal that I've written in the box on your paper into the appropriate response box on the computer."

If the selected goal does not qualify, please ask:

"Is there a different goal that's not on this list that you and a friend are currently pursuing?"

If yes, make sure it qualifies. If it qualifies, follow the script above the black line.

If no, ask:

"Or, is there a goal on here that can be re-phrased a bit differently to include your friend's goal? For example, if you're trying to lose ten pounds by exercising, perhaps you know a friend who is also trying to lose weight but not necessarily 'ten pounds' or 'by exercising.'"

If yes, make sure it qualifies. If it qualifies, follow the script above the black line.

If the participant is still struggling to come up with an idea, you will need to provide the following prompts:

"Keep in mind, this goal does not necessarily have to be one that you and/or your friend are

incredibly committed to."

Some questions to ask that will prompt goal ideas:

- "Are you in the same class as one of your friends? Are you both trying to do well in that class?"
- "Are you trying to keep up a good GPA? Do you know a friend who is trying to do the same?"
- "Are you and a friend in the same club or organization? Do you have an ongoing project to work on with your friend?"
- "Are you and a friend both trying to save money?"
- "Are you and a friend both trying to get a summer internship or job?"
- "Are you and a friend training for a race or for a sport?"
- "Are you and a roommate trying to a better job at keeping up with housework/chores?"

Appendix C

Study 2 Writing Prompt

Please read the prompt below and respond accordingly. Your answers will be kept confidential.

Personal goals are things that you would like to accomplish in your life. Please think about what goals are important to you right now. Think about your goals for your career, education, health, social life, personal growth, and enjoyment. To give you an idea of what we mean by personal goals, former participants have listed these goals:

"To become more active socially and make more friends"; "To be more productive at work"; "To get better grades"; "To be a more responsible parent"; "To stop gaining weight"; "To be less stressed"; "To stick to a fitness plan"; "To get my band going"; "To become fluent in Spanish"; "To spend more time with my friends"; "To spend more time with my children and spouse"; "To avoid working on the weekends"; "To keep an organized living space"; "To be more romantic with my significant other"

We're interested in goals you hope to make some progress on over the next few months, but not finish completely (that is, not a goal you'll finish next week). We're interested in your personal goals (that is, things you'd like to accomplish or change about yourself) and that you set for yourself (that is, not goals or benchmarks imposed on you by others, such as your parents or boss). We're interested in some goals that are difficult for you to pursue as well as some goals that are easy for you to pursue. Please list some goals that you think fit into each category:
Goals that are easy for me to pursue:

Goals that are difficult for me to pursue:

Research Assistant Use Only

A goal that is **easy** for you that you **do not share** with your friend:

A goal that is **difficult** for you that you **do not share** with your friend:

A goal that is **easy** for you that **share** with your friend:

A goal that is **difficult** for you that you **share** with your friend:

Appendix D

Study 2 Research Assistant Script

After the participant signs the informed consent, one research assistant, who is blind to which condition the participant will be in, will hand them another clipboard with a writing prompt.

As soon as the participant finishes writing his/her responses, take one participant at a time into a room to have a private conversation.

Say:
"We asked for you to write down some of your personal goals that are either difficult or easy for you to pursue. I'd like to review some of your goals with you.

Can you tell me a goal that is **easy** for you to pursue that you **do not share** with a friend or romantic partner?"

Check against criteria:

- It's a personal goal—in other words, it's a goal that focuses on bettering that person or that person's position in life
- It's current—this needs to be a goal that they are currently pursuing, not having recently accomplished or "plan to get around to someday"

If goal meets criteria, write down this goal in box provided on back of writing prompt for the participant.

Next, say:
"Great! Now can you tell me a goal that is **difficult** for you to pursue that you **do not share** with a friend or romantic partner?"

Check against criteria:

- It's a personal goal—in other words, it's a goal that focuses on bettering that person or that person's position in life
- It's current—this needs to be a goal that they are currently pursuing, not having recently accomplished or "plan to get around to someday"

If goal meets criteria, write down this goal in box provided on back of writing prompt for the participant.

Next, say:
"Great! Now we'd like for you to think of a person who is close to you (it may be your romantic partner) and with whom you share two personal goals – one goal that is difficult for you to purse and another goal that is easy for you to pursue. In other words, both you and your friend (or romantic partner) are striving for the same personal goals; for example, both of you want "to make an "A" in the same class" and "to exercise four days a week."
Is there a personal goal that you've listed that you know your friend (or romantic partner) is also trying to achieve for him/herself?

First, we would like for you to think of someone who is pursuing a similar goal that is **easy for you to pursue**."

Check against criteria:

- It's a personal goal—in other words, it's a goal that focuses on bettering that person or that person's position in life
- It's current—this needs to be a goal that they are currently pursuing, not having recently accomplished or "plan to get around to someday"
- It's shared—this goal needs to be the same goal for both the participant and the participant's friend

If goal meets criteria, write down this goal in box provided on back of writing prompt for the participant.

Next, say:
"Second, we would also like for you to think of a goal that **difficult for you to pursue** that you share with the **same person** you mentioned above."

Check against criteria:

- It's a personal goal—in other words, it's a goal that focuses on bettering that person or that person's position in life
- It's current—this needs to be a goal that they are currently pursuing, not having recently accomplished or "plan to get around to someday"
- It's shared—this goal needs to be the same goal for both the participant and the participant's friend

If goal meets criteria, write down this goal in box provided on back of writing prompt for the participant.

After you have discussed and written all four goals, the participant is then ready to take the online survey.

Escort the participant to a computer and type in their Participant ID for them. **Then, type the four goals you've discussed and written on their writing prompt into the first page of the online survey for them.**

Then say:
"I've typed in your Participant ID and your four goals in to the first page of the survey for you. **There is a box at the bottom of this screen that asks for your friend's name or nickname– this is the friend with whom you share the last two goals. Please type in that person's name or nickname into the box before you continue the survey."**

If you're discussing a goal does not qualify, please ask:

"Is there a different goal that's not on this list that you think will better qualify for this category?"

"Or, is there a goal on here that can be re-phrased a bit differently to include your friend's goal? For example, if you're trying to lose ten pounds by exercising, perhaps you know a friend who is also trying to lose weight but not necessarily 'ten pounds.'"

If the participant is still struggling to come up with an idea, you may provide the following prompts:

"Keep in mind, this goal does not necessarily have to be one that you and/or your friend are

incredibly committed to."

Some questions to ask that will prompt goal ideas:

- "Are you in the same class as one of your friends? Are you both trying to do well in that class?"
- "Are you trying to keep up a good GPA? Do you know a friend who is trying to do the same?"
- "Are you and a friend in the same club or organization? Do you have an ongoing project to work on with your friend?"
- "Are you and a friend both trying to save money?"
- "Are you and a friend both trying to get a summer internship or job?"
- "Are you and a friend training for a race or for a sport?"
- "Are you and a roommate trying to a better job at keeping up with housework/chores?"