

Engaging the Consumer:  
The Science and Art of the Value Creation Process

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Running Head: Engaging the Consumer

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## Abstract

Regulatory engagement theory (Higgins, 2006) proposes that value is a motivational force of attraction to or repulsion from something, and that *strength of engagement* contributes to *value intensity* independent of hedonic and other sources of value direction. This paper reviews different sources of engagement strength, including dealing with challenges by opposing interfering forces and overcoming personal resistance, preparing for something that is likely to happen, and using “fit” or “proper” means of goal pursuit. We present evidence that each of these sources of engagement strength can intensify the value of something, and we show how stronger engagement can not only make something positive more positive but also make something negative more negative. We also discuss how these effects of stronger engagement on the value of something else are independent of actors’ own personal experiences during goal pursuit. We then broaden regulatory engagement theory by describing the nature of these personal experiences from different sources of engagement strength—distinct positive experiences (e.g., feeling “pleasure” vs. feeling “right”) and distinct negative experiences (e.g., feeling “tension” vs. feeling “defiance”)—and consider the science and art of combining them with engagement strength for maximal persuasion and influence.

## Engaging the Consumer: The Science and Art of the Value Creation Process

Individuals are motivated by goals. Whether those goals are fleeting (e.g., “I want the latest flat-screen TV”) or fundamental (e.g., “I want to be safe and secure”), they are critical for understanding consumer behavior. When we think about goals, we often focus on what it is that people want or don’t want in terms of desired and undesired end-states (i.e., on goal outcomes). People want to be healthy (not ill), trendy (not frumpy), fulfilled (not unsatisfied). Because outcomes are salient, perhaps particularly in consumer contexts, it makes sense that we often pay most attention to the relation between *outcomes* and what consumers value. Yet outcomes or end-states are only one part of understanding motivation within goal pursuit. The *process* of goal pursuit also matters. People can pursue goals, for example, using either eager or vigilant strategies. Sometimes goal pursuit is smooth and uninterrupted and other times obstacles are encountered. Sometimes individuals have to overcome their own resistance (e.g., dislike of washing the dishes) in order to achieve a desired outcome (e.g., a clean kitchen) and sometimes no personal resistance is experienced. In this paper, we argue that to understand how much or how little people value something (i.e., value *intensity*), it’s important to consider not only the outcomes of goal pursuit but also the process and, especially, *strength of engagement in the goal pursuit activity itself*.

Value as defined in relation to *outcomes* reflects the nature of the end-state—what it is that people want or the ultimate goal. Historically, an outcome is valued to the extent that it is useful or satisfies some need (e.g., Gibson, 1979; Weiner, 1972; Woodworth & Schlosberg, 1954) or produces pleasure and not pain (e.g., Bentham, 1781/1988) (for a more extensive discussion, see Higgins, 2007). From these classic perspectives, the extent to which Kayla will value her cellphone could depend on its ability to fulfill her needs (e.g., a need for belongingness

and connectedness with others) or because it provides her the pleasurable experiences of listening to her music and viewing photos while on the subway.

Value as defined in relation to *process* reflects how the goal pursuit activity itself is experienced. In consumer contexts, this may often reflect decision-making processes (e.g., the decision-making strategy Kayla used in deciding whether or not to purchase her cellphone). However, we conceptualize process quite broadly to include any factors that affect the actor's experiences during the goal pursuit activity, including situational factors that are background to the purpose of the goal pursuit. For example, the fact that Kayla relied primarily on her feelings to make the decision (a personal factor) and the fact that Kayla had to deal with other customers' loud voices while she was talking to the salesperson about features of the different cellphones (a situational factor) both contribute to how she experiences the goal pursuit activity and could impact how much she values the phone she selected.

In many motivational models, the process of goal pursuit contributes to the value of the desired end-state (the goal object or value target) only indirectly through the contribution of particular means to achieving that desired end-state. The process may be valued because it is socially prescribed (e.g., having value from satisfying some social norm), because it is effective (i.e., has high instrumental value), or because it is efficient (i.e., has low costs). It's also been argued that the process may be valued when it meets the criteria for multifinality, fulfilling both the focal attainment goal and some other background goal (Kruglanski, Shah, Fishbach, Friedman, Chun, & Sleeth-Keppler, 2002; Kruglanski, 2006). In these conceptualizations, what is valued about the process is its contribution to attaining various outcomes (high benefits with low costs).

However, we believe that the goal pursuit process can contribute more to value beyond

its relation to attaining high benefits with low costs. This is because the activity of pursuing a goal involves engagement, and there are different sources of the strength of people's engagement. This has two effects: (a) The strength of engagement in the goal pursuit contributes directly to the value intensity of the *goal object* (*a goal-object, value intensification effect*) and (b) the different sources of engagement strength contribute different experiential qualities to the *goal pursuit activity* (*a goal-pursuit, activity experience effect*). Thus, the process variable of engagement strength, together with its sources, contributes to value in multiple ways that need to be appreciated more fully.

### Regulatory Engagement Theory

Regulatory engagement theory (Higgins, 2006; see also Higgins, 2008) proposes that value is a motivational force experience (cf. Lewin, 1951). Experiencing something as having positive value corresponds to experiencing attraction towards it (e.g., trying to move toward it) and experiencing something as having negative value corresponds to experiencing repulsion from it (e.g., trying to move away from it). As a motivational force experience, the value experience varies not only in direction but also in intensity (i.e., as relatively weak or strong). The two force experiences of direction and intensity, *while experienced holistically*, are distinct from one another with respect to their sources. That is, the sources that contribute to value intensity can be independent of those that contribute to value direction.

The hedonic experience associated with the value target, i.e., the subjective pleasure/pain properties of the end-state or goal object, is a major contributor to value direction, but there are other contributors to the forces of attraction or repulsion as well. For example, as shown in Figure 1, a factor such as need satisfaction may provide value direction even if it does not produce a hedonic experience (e.g., the target satisfies a vitamin deficiency). Individuals may

also experience a force of attraction towards a target because of shared beliefs with others about what's desired and what's accepted (i.e., norms and standards), at both interpersonal and even broader societal levels. Notably, these sources of value also contribute to the *intensity* of the value experience. But, as shown in Figure 1, they are not the only contributor. What is unique about the regulatory engagement model is its consideration of sources of value intensity that are nondirectional. Specifically, there are sources of *engagement strength* which contribute to the intensity, but not the direction, of the value force experience.

Engagement is a state of being involved, occupied, fully absorbed, or engrossed in something—*sustained attention*. In our lab, engagement strength has been measured in a number of different ways—arm pressure during task engagement (Förster, Higgins, & Idson, 1998), task persistence (Förster et al., 1998), attention to the central merits of a task (Bianco, Higgins, & Klem, 2003; Cesario & Higgins, 2008), and task performance (Bianco et al.; Shah, Higgins, & Friedman, 1998). The more strongly an individual is engaged, the more intense the motivational force experience. Consequently, an individual who is more strongly engaged in goal pursuit will experience a positive target more positively and a negative target more negatively.

Once again, as shown in Figure 1, hedonic properties can themselves contribute to engagement strength. For example, the anticipated pleasure of drinking a bottle of 1990 Château Pétrus may lead to greater engagement than the anticipated pleasure of drinking a bottle of Charles Shaw. However, as shown in Figure 1, a target's hedonic properties are not the only source of engagement strength. In the remainder of this paper, we focus on an exploration of sources of engagement strength that are independent from sources of value direction and that arise from *the goal pursuit process itself* rather than from the target's hedonic properties. We focus on how three distinct aspects of the goal pursuit process—the impact of obstacles and

challenges, the *experienced* likelihood of outcome attainment, and the use of “fit” and “proper” means in goal pursuit— contribute to increased strength of engagement. We conclude by discussing some lingering questions and possibilities for future research.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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### Dealing With Challenges

Challenges are common during goal pursuits. Whether individuals oppose outside interfering forces (e.g., bad weather during an early morning run) or overcome inside personal resistance (e.g., not wanting to get out of bed), they experience an increased strength of engagement if they initiate and maintain the goal pursuit. Thus, even when these challenges are unpleasant, they can increase the attraction toward a positive target. In this section, we discuss how dealing with challenges encountered in the process of goal pursuit contributes to value intensity.

#### *Opposing Interfering Forces*

Interfering forces in goal pursuit are any forces that could hinder, impede, or obstruct a preferred course of action. Interfering forces can be physical barriers, other people (e.g., authority figures), endogenous to the task (e.g., a difficult puzzle), or part of the background (e.g., distracting sounds). Here, we focus on how two kinds of interfering forces – threats to freedom and difficulty/adversity – can increase engagement strength and create value. Interfering forces themselves do not create engagement; however, when individuals *oppose* interfering forces, the opposition increases engagement strength that intensifies value.

That opposition is involved in value creation was noted by Lewin (1935), who described

the situation, familiar to parents, of children valuing an activity more strongly after it has been prohibited by an adult. The idea was developed further in social psychological research on reactance theory (Brehm, 1966; Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Wicklund, 1974). Reactance theory concerns people's desires to be autonomous agents of their own destiny. When an individual's freedom is threatened, he or she will react so as to protect and restore that freedom. An early study (Brehm, Stires, Sensenig, & Shaban, 1966) provided evidence that one way in which people attempt to restore their freedom is by increasing the value of an object that is eliminated from their choice set.

According to reactance theory, the underlying mechanism for value creation is a motivation to restore a freedom that has been eliminated or threatened with elimination. It is also possible that another mechanism for value creation exists through increased engagement strength. When individuals experience a positive option being taken away, they can oppose this interfering force, which strengthens their engagement in what they're doing. This would intensify that option's attractiveness.

Threats to freedom not only come through reducing options. As Lewin (1935) noted, they also come through the prohibitions and counter-recommendations of others. For instance, warning labels on violent television programs, designed to *decrease* interest, often backfire and *increase* interest in watching the programs (Bushman & Stack, 1996). Recommendations, even in more innocuous forms, can create interfering forces to be opposed. In a recent study by Fitzsimons and Lehman (2004, Study 2), for example, participants were presented with a choice between four granola bars, one of which was clearly the most attractive (dominant) option. When the subjective importance was high (the stakes were real – participants would have an opportunity to take home their chosen granola bar) and an expert recommended *against* the most

attractive granola bar, they were significantly more likely to choose it and were even more confident in the value of their choice (more likely to believe it was the “right” choice).

Despite the fact that participants in the high reactance condition reported less satisfaction in the decision process and greater difficulty when making the decision, they valued the chosen granola bar more. This illustrates how an outside factor in goal pursuit that produces an unpleasant experience of the goal pursuit activity can intensify attraction toward the value target by strengthening engagement. We believe that the distinction between the experience of the goal pursuit activity itself and the intensity experience of the target’s value has significant implications—a point we expand on in the final section of this paper.

People’s sensitivity to others’ attempts at persuasion can impact how they respond to threats to their freedom. For instance, individuals who are high in reactance more generally may be even more likely to oppose perceived threats to freedom, further increasing the attractiveness of the “forbidden” option (Bushman & Stack, 1996; Fitzsimons & Lehman, 2004). People may also vary in how much and when they are aware of others’ persuasion techniques, as highlighted by the “persuasion knowledge model” (Friestad & Wright, 1994). This means that there is likely to be considerable variability in the extent to which perceived threats to freedom, as interfering forces, are opposed.

A perceived threat to freedom is not the only kind of interfering force that people will oppose. There are other kinds of forces that interfere with goal pursuit by increasing the difficulty or adversity that is encountered in the goal pursuit. Some tasks (the Sunday NY Times crossword puzzle) are more difficult than others (the Monday NY Times crossword puzzle). Sometimes the conditions under which one engages in a task are more difficult than others (e.g., writing an article to the strains of a jackhammer vs. Bach). Sometimes physical barriers are

encountered (e.g., the stairs have to be taken to one's favorite shop because the elevator is broken). Although the sources of difficulty vary, all have the potential to strengthen engagement. However, whether or not difficulty strengthens engagement depends on whether or not individuals *oppose* the interfering force. If individuals oppose difficulty or adversity, engagement is strengthened. If, however, difficulty or adversity results in individuals deciding not to initiate action in the first place or to give up during pursuit, engagement will be weakened.

Importantly, even if individuals persist in goal pursuit, they may respond to difficulty or adversity in different ways. Consider, for example, trying to cope with a distracting background noise while working on a task. If the distraction is perceived as an interfering force that must be overcome in order to succeed on the task, it is likely to strengthen engagement. However, if the distraction is perceived as an aversive nuisance with which one must cope, it is likely to weaken engagement by drawing attention away from the task to the coping efforts (e.g., emotion-focused coping).

Although the adversity is unpleasant in each case, regulatory engagement theory predicts that stronger engagement in the task from opposing interference and weaker engagement in the task from coping efforts would have *opposite* effects on the value intensity of the goal pursuit target. Indeed, we (Higgins, Marguc, & Scholer, 2009) recently obtained evidence that the effect of a background challenge on value creation depends on how individuals treat the challenge. In two studies, participants worked to solve enough anagrams to receive an attractive prize while an aversive noise played in the background. All participants succeeded in winning the prize. The dependent measure was the perceived value of the prize object. In one study, participants were randomly assigned to two different background noises: a tape of dentist drills and a tape of words. Both background noises were aversive, but only the "words" directly interfered with the

task of solving verbal anagrams. Thus, we expected participants to oppose the interfering “words” but to cope with the nuisance “drills.” In a second study, all participants heard the *same* aversive sound but it was presented either as an “interference to oppose” or as “a nuisance to cope with.” To the extent that participants perceived the background noise as a difficulty to either oppose or cope with, we found, as predicted, that the prize *increased* in value for the “words” and “opposing interference” conditions but *decreased* in value for the “drills” and “coping with a nuisance” conditions.

### *Overcoming Personal Resistance*

At times barriers spring from within, not without. And even when an obstacle is external, the real challenge can be to overcome one’s own personal resistance in order to engage in some pursuit. This is especially true when goal pursuit involves some unavoidable unpleasantness or has some real costs associated with it. When people know that some aversiveness is inevitable if they engage in a particular goal pursuit, they naturally resist the goal pursuit initially. However, if they overcome this initial resistance by freely choosing to pursue the goal (fully aware of its unpleasant aspects), they experience increased commitment to the pursuit (Brickman, 1987). Just as opposing external interfering forces strengthens engagement, so too does overcoming personal resistance.

As Brickman (1987) noted, the phenomenon of value creation from overcoming personal resistance is most prominently associated with studies testing cognitive dissonance theory (Brehm & Cohen, 1962; Festinger, 1957; Wicklund & Brehm, 1976). Engaging in goal pursuit despite being aware of its high costs can be thought of as inducing dissonance because of the presence of two inconsistent cognitions: “This is unpleasant” and “I freely chose to do it.” Cognitive dissonance theory proposes that one way people can attempt to reduce this dissonance

is by changing their attitude toward the value target (i.e., value increase from justification). An additional mechanism is strengthened engagement from overcoming resistance. When the value target is initially positive, stronger engagement would intensify its positivity. The implication is that a little personal resistance, if overcome, can be a good thing for value creation.

In a classic study on effort justification (Aronson & Mills, 1959), for example, female participants who went through a relatively severe initiation in order to join a group (reading sexually explicit words in front of a male experimenter) subsequently valued the group more than did female participants who did not face a severe initiation process (see also Axsom & Cooper, 1985; Zimbardo, 1965). In a more recent study (Fishbach & Trope, 2005), participants who overcame their resistance to the short-term costs (taking a test in the middle of the night) associated with long-term benefits (individualized diagnostic information about their own cognitive functioning at night) valued the diagnostic test more than did participants who did not face these short-term costs. In a consumer context, Dick and Lord (1998) have found that individuals who paid a membership fee to access some service (e.g., to join a video store, gym, etc.) valued the store more than those who had not paid a membership fee (see also Arkes and Blumer, 1985). Notably, Freud (1913/1958) argued that patients should pay a fee for therapy because fees were an indispensable part of the curative motivation in therapy.

In the above studies, a positive value target became more attractive when engagement was strengthened by overcoming personal resistance. Strengthening engagement by overcoming personal resistance should also intensify the negativity of a negative value target. Sehnert, Franks, and Higgins (2009) recently tested this prediction in a study on *scarcity value*. According to basic economics, the demand for something is higher when its supply is lower (holding price constant). The competitive nature of humans leads to the desire to be special by possessing

objects that other don't and can't easily have. The idea is that the property of scarcity itself activates these motives and makes a scarce item more valuable independent of that item's other properties (see Carew, 1996), as long as the item is attractive enough to be wanted. Sehnert et al. (2009)'s study met this requirement by excluding any participant who reported that they disliked the value target (yogurt) or who was full when the session began.

Participants were told that they could try a taste of either Yogurt A or Yogurt B that appeared together on a tray. On the tray was just a single cup of Yogurt A along with several cups of Yogurt B. Thus, Yogurt A appeared more scarce than Yogurt B. This apparent scarcity, however, was reduced in the Low Scarcity condition by telling participants that whatever cup of yogurt they chose to taste would be *replaced* by another cup of the same yogurt for the next participant in the study. Participants in the High Scarcity condition thought the yogurt would not be replaced. After making their decision, all participants took a taste of the yogurt they had chosen. Unbeknownst to the participants, Yogurt A and Yogurt B were exactly the same yogurt.

One might expect that Yogurt A, especially with no replacement, would be chosen most often because it would have higher scarcity value. However, the more scarce it is, the stronger the norm would apply against selfishly "taking the last one." Thus, there are *two* forces operating in opposite directions. For the participants in this study, the normative force was apparently stronger than the scarcity value force because more participants chose Yogurt B than Yogurt A. But the central question is how much did participants value their chosen yogurt? Two measures of value were taken after the participants took their first taste of the yogurt—assigned monetary price, "How much would you be willing to pay for a cup of this yogurt, given that a typical cup of yogurt that size costs \$2.50?" and desire to eat more of the yogurt. Note that the social norm against selfishness is not a factor when these measures of value are taken.

According to the standard notion of scarcity value, participants in the High Scarcity condition who chose Yogurt A should value it *more* than participants in the Low Scarcity condition who chose Yogurt A. Regulatory engagement theory, however, has a different perspective. In the high scarcity condition, a *situation of scarcity* has been created. This scarcity situation should strengthen engagement in the decision-making process. According to regulatory engagement theory, then, strength of engagement would be stronger for the participants in the High Scarcity condition than the Low Scarcity condition. Stronger engagement would intensify the value response to the chosen yogurt (whether A or B). Because the chosen yogurt is always the same slightly bitter yogurt and participants dislike this yogurt once they have tasted it, in the High Scarcity condition this yogurt should become even *more unattractive, i.e.,* value should be *less*, than in the Low Scarcity condition. On both measures of value, this is precisely what Sehnert et al. (2009) found.

#### *Consumer Psychology Implications of Dealing With Challenges*

How might consumers' responses to dealing with challenges work not only to support the hoped-for outcomes of salespeople but also to impede them? Imagine Jack, an avid PC user. The recommendation by a Computer World salesclerk that he consider switching to a Mac is experienced as a constraining force. Jack's opposition to this interfering force strengthens his engagement, leading him to value his PC even more highly. However, what if Jack decided to switch to a Mac? The strengthened engagement from overcoming his own personal resistance could now lead him to value the Mac more highly than if he had experienced no initial resistance at all. Which scenario is desirable from the perspective of the salesclerk would depend on what the salesclerk really wants. The salesclerk, for example, could secretly want Jack to stick to the more expensive PC option. Whatever the true goal, to be effective the salesclerk needs to clearly

identify the value target and predict the effects of obstacles and challenges. If two attractive options are kept in mind during a difficult decision, for example, it is possible for *both* options to increase in attractiveness. Now *that* outcome would be highly beneficial for a salesclerk who was selling both options.

Apart from the study by Sehnert et al. (2009), we have only begun to investigate negative value targets. Here, we wish to note that there are interesting implications for consumer researchers about the relation between engagement strength and value intensity for negative targets. People can feel ambivalent or even negative towards new products and services. In these situations, stronger engagement would lead consumers to have more intense negative responses. Given this implication, it's important to consider how individuals feel about the value target. In the negative case, interventions that *weaken* engagement could actually produce better outcomes than interventions that strengthen engagement.

#### Preparing For Something That is Likely to Happen

Challenges, especially barriers to goal pursuit, can also affect engagement strength in another way by changing the likelihood that a goal will be reached. The variable of likelihood (or expectancy), however, is more general and can be affected by factors other than barriers to goal pursuit. Likelihood concerns perceptions or beliefs that something will or will not happen, regardless of the source of those beliefs. Individual's likelihood beliefs have long been recognized as an important component in models of value (e.g., Atkinson, 1964; Edwards, 1955; Lewin, Dumbo, Festinger, & Sears, 1944; Tolman, 1955; Vroom, 1964). In general, the subjective utility model of motivation has assumed that the subjective likelihood of a given outcome combines multiplicatively with the subjective value of that outcome to determine value intensity. For example, a high likelihood of experiencing a positive outcome would produce a

greater force of attraction than a low likelihood of that outcome. In these models, beliefs about the likelihood of a specific outcome are important because of the *information* they communicate about whether a particular future outcome will occur, with the only motivating force (the pull) coming from the subjective value of the outcomes themselves—value from having desired results (Higgins, 2009). In addition, when there are two possible outcomes, A or B, a high likelihood of A (e.g., 80%) is equivalent to a low likelihood of B (e.g., 20%).

Regulatory engagement theory has a different perspective on the variable of likelihood (or expectancy) than the classic subjective utility model (or value-expectancy model). It considers likelihood to have motivational force in its own right because it concerns another way of being effective. Specifically, the likelihood of something happening not only communicates information, but also contributes to establishing what's real (i.e., to *truth effectiveness*; see Higgins, 2009). In so doing, subjective likelihood can also create value by strengthening and weakening engagement (Higgins, 2006). When people experience high (*vs.* low) likelihood, future outcomes feel real. Consequently, individuals are likely to engage themselves fully (be highly involved and absorbed) in what they are doing—*prepare for something that will really happen*. Moreover, when there are two possible outcomes, A or B, experiencing a high likelihood of A is *not* equivalent to experiencing a low likelihood of B because the first experience strengthens engagement—induces preparation for A— whereas the second experience weakens engagement (no need to prepare for B).

In a recent test of this proposed effect of likelihood by Higgins, Franks, & Pavarini (2009), undergraduates believed that they were participating in a marketing study for a new dairy company that was conducting a study to decide what would become their newest flavor of yogurt. They were told that in the first part of the study, they would taste two yogurt flavors that

each represented a general flavor category (A category and B category). Participants were further told that in the second part of the study they would try more concentrations within just one of these general flavor categories. Unbeknownst to participants, one yogurt was pre-tested to be good-tasting (sugar & nutmeg flavor) and one of the yogurts was pre-tested to be bad-tasting (clove flavor) (Botti & Iyengar, 2004). In some conditions there was a high probability of later trying various concentrations of the *good* yogurt flavor (i.e., expressed either as 80% chance of the good or as 20% of the bad), whereas in other conditions there was a high probability of later trying various concentrations of the *bad* yogurt flavor (i.e., expressed as 80% chance of the bad or as 20% of the good).

It is not clear how anticipating positive or negative future tastings, respectively, would influence the value of the specific yogurts that were currently being tasted. Strictly speaking, the subjective utility model is silent on this because the probabilities are not about tasting the two yogurts now. Perhaps, looking forward to tasting more of the good yogurt later would make people feel good in the present, and being upset about tasting more of the bad yogurt later would make people feel bad in the present. But, in any case, the effect would be *opposite* for the probable good yogurt versus the probable bad yogurt. In addition, the logic of subjective utility *equates* high probability of tasting more of the *good* yogurt (80%) with low probability of tasting more of the *bad* yogurt (20%) because these refer to the same future outcome—high probability of the good yogurt. (And similarly for 80% probability of the bad yogurt and 20% probability of the good yogurt.)

Regulatory engagement theory, in contrast, proposes that expressed high likelihoods not only communicate information about a future outcome but also strengthen engagement in the present because the motivational system begins to prepare for what is likely to happen. And this

effect on strengthening engagement is independent of whether the expressed high likelihood is for the good yogurt or the bad yogurt. Whether preparing for a future good yogurt to happen (expressed high likelihood for the good yogurt) or preparing for a future bad yogurt to happen (expressed high likelihood for the bad yogurt), the current motivational system becomes more strongly engaged. From this perspective, then, *high* likelihood of tasting more of the *good* yogurt (80%) and *low* likelihood of tasting more of the *bad* yogurt (20%) are *not* the same, and high likelihood of tasting more of the bad yogurt (80%) and low likelihood of tasting the good yogurt (20%) are *not* the same. What *is* the same is expressed high likelihood of the good yogurt or expressed high likelihood of the bad yogurt. What matters is preparing in the present for something represented as likely to happen in the future, thereby strengthening engagement. And what stronger engagement should do in the present is intensify participants' value reactions to the two yogurts—make the good yogurt *more* attractive and the bad yogurt *more* repulsive.

In support of this “likelihood as preparing for something” prediction, Higgins et al. (2009) found that under conditions of expressed high likelihood, compared to expressed low likelihood, participants' ratings of the good yogurt flavor were more positive and their ratings of the bad yogurt flavor were more negative. This general high versus low expressed likelihood effect was independent of whether the expressed high likelihood was in relation to the good yogurt or the bad yogurt, and was independent of whether the expressed low likelihood was in relation to the good yogurt or the bad yogurt. This was also reflected in participants' willingness to pay for the yogurts under high versus low likelihood conditions. Participants were willing to pay *more* for the good yogurt and *less* for the bad yogurt under conditions of expressed high (vs. low) likelihood, regardless of whether the expressed high likelihood was in relation to the good or the bad yogurt.

This study shows that the expressed likelihood of later receiving a particular yogurt category in Part 2 of the study—independent of the actual probability of a particular future outcome—affected the present value of *both* yogurts in Part 1 of the study. This is an intriguing phenomenon whose breadth of applicability needs to be investigated. Future studies need to explore how broadly preparing for something to happen in the future event can change the value intensity of a target in the present. Can the expressed likelihood of a future event (e.g., playing some computer game), that has no relation whatsoever to a current value target (e.g., yogurt), still influence how that current target is evaluated? This possibility is currently being investigated.

#### Using “Fit” Or “Proper” Means of Goal Pursuit

In this last section, we discuss one of the central concepts that comes to mind when thinking about the goal pursuit *process*—the *means* that individuals use when pursuing goals. Traditionally, as we discussed earlier, means are often seen to contribute to value insofar as they make a hedonic contribution to the outcome—increasing benefits while decreasing costs. In this section, we discuss additional ways in which the means that people adopt can affect value intensity by strengthening engagement in the goal pursuit process.

#### *Use of Proper Means*

Cultural maxims highlight the value that comes from *how* goals are pursued, independent of value from goal pursuit outcomes. “It is not enough to do good, one must do it the right way.” “The end does not justify the means.” “What counts is not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game.” It has been recognized for a long time that the use of proper means to pursue goals has value to people (e.g., Merton, 1957; Pennington & Hastie, 1988; Rokeach, 1973; Tetlock, 1991; Tyler & Lind, 1992; Tyler & Blader, 2000; Tversky & Shafir, 1992). Typically,

this added value comes from the decision process satisfying a *second* goal of the decision maker, such as the goal of behaving in an ethical or just manner, that is separate from the goal that initiated the focal goal pursuit. The additional value derived from attaining the second “ethical” goal is experienced independently of whatever value derives from the object of the focal goal pursuit (Kruglanski et al., 2002). Regulatory engagement theory, however, predicts that pursuing a goal in a proper way, by strengthening engagement, could also impact the value of the original goal object itself (see also Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2003).

What does it mean to pursue a goal in a “proper” way? We are referring to individuals’ *perceptions* that the way they are pursuing a goal is not solely instrumental but is also *appropriate* given the current circumstances, such as appropriate for the type of goal being pursued or appropriate for the individual’s current role or identity (see March, 1994). Consequently, the same goal pursuit process could be framed as being purely instrumental or as being the proper or appropriate way to make the decision. What is important is whether the way in which the goal is being pursued is perceived as proper, regardless of whether its being “proper” derives from a narrowly defined sense of appropriateness given the current circumstances or from a broader sense of culturally shared beliefs about what is proper.

A recent series of studies supported the proposal that making a decision in a proper way affects value intensity (Higgins, Camacho, Idson, Spiegel, & Scholer, 2008). In these studies, everyone made the same choice between two alternatives, a coffee mug and a non-expensive pen, by using the same instrumental means—considering the positive and negative consequences of choosing the mug and the positive and negative consequences of choosing the pen. The coffee mug and pen were carefully selected to ensure that almost all of the participants would choose the mug over the pen. Thus, our participants not only used the same instrumental means to make

their decision, but they also made the same choice, thus controlling for outcome.

What varied across conditions was that some participants not only used the instrumental means to make their decision but also experienced these means as being the right or justifiable (i.e., proper) way to make the decision. Specifically, participants' experience of *using proper means* to make their choice was induced by telling participants to justify their decision or to make their decision "*in the right way*." The participants in the contrast conditions used the same means to make their choice but were given instructions that framed them as *purely instrumental means* by telling them to think of reasons for their decision or to make "*the best choice*." The studies found that the perceived monetary value of the same chosen mug was substantially greater in the "proper way" conditions than in the "instrumental way" conditions. This effect was independent of participants' mood and their perceptions of the effectiveness or efficiency of the decision process.

Participants in the proper way condition also showed stronger engagement in the task, as evidenced by greater attention to the central merits of the decision-making task (listing more positive attributes of the mug in the "proper way" condition) (see also Bianco et al., 2003; Cesario & Higgins, 2008). Despite this greater attention to the positive attributes of the mug in the "proper way" condition, the number of positive attributes listed was *not* directly related to its value, providing further support for a non-hedonic mechanism. In the "instrumental way" condition, on the other hand, the value of the chosen mug *was* dependent on the number of positive attributes listed (i.e., its hedonic quality). Finally, the value increase in the "proper way" condition was especially strong for participants who endorsed (in a questionnaire) maxims like those mentioned earlier that advocate the importance of pursuing goals in a proper way. This is what would be expected if higher value in the "proper way" condition derives from engaging

more strongly in the decision-making activity because you not only believe you are behaving properly but *you also* believe that behaving properly is important.

### *Regulatory Fit*

The means that people use to pursue goals can increase engagement strength because they *sustain the underlying orientation* to the goal pursuit. Individuals pursue goals with some motivational orientation or concern that directs their goal pursuit (e.g., to have fun, to attain an ideal). This motivational orientation is independent from the *how* of goal pursuit—the strategic ways in which people pursue goals. This sets up the possibility that individuals can pursue goals in ways that fit or do not fit their underlying orientation. Individuals experience regulatory fit when their goal orientation is sustained by the strategic manner in which they pursue the goal, and they experience nonfit when their orientation is disrupted by the strategic manner of their goal pursuit (Higgins, 2000). When people experience regulatory fit, they engage more strongly in what they are doing. Thus, regulatory fit is another process variable that has the potential to impact how individuals value an outcome through its effects on strengthening engagement.

Consider, for example, individuals who have the goal to be in good physical shape. Some people have a promotion focus orientation toward the end-state of being in shape as something they hope to attain (an ideal). Others have a prevention focus orientation toward the end-state of being in shape as something they believe they have a responsibility to attain (an ought) (Higgins, 1997). In addition, some people may attend extra classes at the gym as an eager way to attain their goal (which would fit promotion), whereas other people may carefully follow their doctor's dietary recommendations as a vigilant way to attain their goal (which would fit prevention). When individuals pursue a goal in a manner that fits their orientation, their underlying motivational orientation is sustained, thereby strengthening engagement in the goal pursuit

process. While much of the research on regulatory fit has been conducted with regards to regulatory focus motivational orientations (e.g., Förster et al., 1998; Hong & Lee, 2008; Idson, Liberman, & Higgins, 2004; Shah et al., 1998), fit effects can be found for other orientations as well, such as pursuing a goal because it's fun versus its important (Bianco et al., 2003) or in a locomotion versus assessment mode (e.g., Avnet & Higgins, 2003; Benjamin & Flynn, 2006; Kruglanski, Pierro, & Higgins, 2007).

Returning to our example of individuals with the goal to get in shape, the end-state of being in good shape has outcome value. However, independent of this outcome value, individuals who pursue their physical fitness goal under conditions of regulatory fit (e.g., a promotion-focused individual pursuing physical fitness in an eager way) will also experience greater engagement than those who pursue this goal under conditions of nonfit (e.g., a promotion-focused individual pursuing physical fitness in a vigilant way). Regulatory fit, by increasing engagement, intensifies the value response to a target. To examine this directly, Idson et al. (2004) modified an example from Thaler (1980) in which participants were instructed to imagine that they were buying a book for their classes. In one study, prior to reading the scenario, the regulatory focus state of participants was experimentally primed by having them write about their personal hopes and aspirations (promotion priming) or about their personal sense of duty and obligation (prevention priming). Participants were then given one of two book-buying scenarios. In the positive outcome scenario, participants read that they arrived at the bookstore to discover that there were still copies of the book for sale (i.e., they wouldn't have to go to other bookstores to look for it). In the negative outcome scenario, participants read that they arrived at the bookstore to discover that all of the copies of the books were gone (i.e., they would have to go to other bookstores to look for it).

Based on prior research (Förster, Grant, Idson, & Higgins, 2001), Idson et al. (2004) theorized that anticipating a positive outcome, by promoting eagerness, would fit a promotion state whereas anticipating a negative outcome, by maintaining vigilance, would fit a prevention state. As predicted, in the positive outcome condition, promotion-primed participants (fit) gave more positive ratings than prevention-primed participants (nonfit) about how it would feel to find the book at the bookstore. Likewise, in the negative outcome condition, prevention-primed participants (fit) gave more negative ratings than promotion-primed participants (nonfit) about how it would feel to find no copies left. Participants in conditions of fit also reported stronger engagement than participants in conditions of nonfit, and engagement was a significant mediator of the regulatory fit effect on value intensity for both the positive and the negative outcomes.

In a study that highlights regulatory fit effects with motivational orientations other than regulatory focus, Avnet and Higgins (2003) induced a locomotion orientation, concerned with movement from state to state, or an assessment orientation, concerned with making comparisons (Higgins, Kruglanski, & Pierro, 2003). Participants had to select a book light using either a progressive elimination strategy (fit for locomotion) or a full-evaluation strategy (fit for assessment). Participants in conditions of fit offered more of their own money to buy the same chosen book light than did participants in conditions of nonfit. Indeed, participants in conditions of fit have been shown to be willing to pay 40-60% more for the *same* chosen object compared to participants in conditions of nonfit (Avnet & Higgins, 2003; 2006; Higgins, Idson, Freitas, Spiegel, & Molden, 2003).

Consumers often make decisions after being exposed to some type of persuasive attempt. Several studies have demonstrated that when positively evaluated persuasive messages take advantage of the principles of regulatory fit, individuals will be more persuaded by the messages.

For example, participants exposed to messages that fit their orientations increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables (Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004; Latimer, Williams-Piehota et al., 2008; Spiegel, Grant-Pillow, & Higgins, 2004), use more sunscreen (Lee & Aaker, 2004), increase physical activity (Latimer, Rivers, et al., 2008), and reduce intentions to smoke (Kim, 2006; Zhao & Pechmann, 2007).

Individuals are not only more persuaded by *messages* that fit their regulatory orientation, they are also more persuaded by *people* who fit their regulatory orientation. For instance, whereas promotion focused individuals showed an increase in academic motivation when a role model highlighted eager strategies for achieving academic success, prevention focused individuals were more motivated by a role model who highlighted vigilant strategies for avoiding academic failure (Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002; see also Lockwood, Chasteen, & Wong, 2005). Cesario and Higgins (2008) have shown that nonverbal gestures, speech rates, and body positions conveying a sense of eagerness are more persuasive for promotion focused individuals, whereas those conveying a sense of vigilance are more persuasive for prevention focused individuals.

Notably, persuasive attempts that take advantage of regulatory fit are not always effective. As predicted by regulatory engagement theory, if individuals have a negative response to a persuasive message, regulatory fit will intensify that *negative* response through its effects on strengthening engagement. Cesario et al. (2004) presented participants with a persuasive message of moderate strength such that participants varied in their positive or negative reactions to the message. For participants who had positive thoughts about the message, fit increased their positive evaluations of the message. However, for participants who had negative thoughts about the message, fit increased their *negative* evaluation of the message. Similarly, Aaker and Lee

(2001) found that participants in fit conditions evaluated a message more positively when the arguments were convincing (strong arguments), but more *negatively* when the arguments were *not* convincing (weak arguments). And individuals not only can have negative responses towards persuasive messages, but also towards those who bring the message. In fact, this is typically the case with opinion deviates in groups. Would regulatory fit intensify hostility toward a deviate? Indeed, a recent study has shown that stronger engagement from regulatory fit intensified group members' dislike of an opinion deviate (Alexander, Levine, & Higgins, 2009). *Seller beware!* Taking advantages of regulatory fit in persuasive appeals can backfire if individuals have a negative response to the product, message content, or message source.

*Regulatory Fit: A few caveats.* As we've discussed in this section, one of the ways that regulatory fit appears to affect the value target is by increasing engagement strength. However, regulatory fit can affect value through other channels as well. When individuals pursue goals and make decisions under conditions of regulatory fit, they have been shown to "feel right" about what they are doing (Cesario et al., 2004; Cesario & Higgins, 2008), experience greater processing fluency (Lee & Aaker, 2004), have more positive feelings towards the focal activity (Latimer et al., in press), show greater accessibility for persuasive messages (Lee & Aaker, 2004), and feel that persuasive information is more diagnostic (e.g., useful) for making behavioral choices (Zhao & Pechmann, 2007). There is much yet to be understood about how regulatory fit can be applied most effectively in persuasive contexts (see Aaker & Lee, 2006; Avnet & Higgins, 2006; Cesario, Higgins, & Scholer, 2008; Lee & Higgins, in press). In particular, it will be exciting to explore the extent to which these different regulatory fit mechanisms are both related and distinct. For instance, processing fluency could increase from greater engagement or feeling right about what you are doing could strengthen engagement.

A consideration of regulatory fit also highlights a critical distinction to be made within the goal pursuit process. Regulatory fit occurs when individuals use *strategic* means that fit their underlying motivational orientations. Strategies reflect the general means or plans for goal pursuit (e.g., eagerness versus vigilance), but do not reflect the specific tactical ways in which those means are enacted in a particular context (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987; Higgins, 1997; Scholer & Higgins, 2008). For example, whereas conservative tactics often serve vigilant strategies, risky tactics can serve vigilance best when conditions are negative or threatening because it is then necessary do to whatever it takes to get back to safety and security (Scholer, Stroessner, & Higgins, 2008; Scholer, Zou, Fujita, Stroessner, & Higgins, 2009). This distinction between strategies and tactics implies greater flexibility in creating conditions of fit; i.e., given that different tactics can serve a given strategy, there are multiple ways to create fit (and nonfit). It also implies that a failure to distinguish between strategies and tactics could create nonfit rather than fit, such as introducing a conservative tactic to a prevention-focused individual when that individual is experiencing the current situation as threatening.

#### Broadening the Regulatory Engagement Story

Thus far, we've reviewed evidence that a number of different factors in the goal pursuit *process* can directly affect the value intensity of the goal object through their impact on strengthening engagement. We've focused on one particular chain of process relations: goal pursuit factors that strengthen engagement and thereby intensify attraction to or repulsion from a value target—opposing interfering forces, overcoming personal resistance, experiencing that something is likely to happen, using proper means, and regulatory fit. We have focused on this *goal-object, value intensification effect* because it has received the most attention in empirical investigations and most directly follows from regulatory engagement theory as originally

proposed (Higgins, 2006). However, this effect is not the whole story. As we have mentioned earlier, the various factors in the goal pursuit process that are sources of engagement strength create different experiences of the goal pursuit activity itself. The effects of these goal-pursuit, activity experiences need to be distinguished from strength of engagement effects.

#### Distinguishing Engagement Strength Effects From Goal-Pursuit Experience Effects

The distinction between engagement strength effects and goal-pursuit experience effects was highlighted in the original formulation of regulatory engagement theory (Higgins, 2006) by considering cases where a source of engagement strength produced a negative goal-pursuit experience, like having to oppose an interfering force, but attraction toward a positive value target was intensified. The major reason for emphasizing this distinction was to avoid confusing the value of an actor's own personal experience during the goal pursuit activity with the value of what it was that the actor was pursuing (i.e., the goal object). But another reason for emphasizing the distinction between engagement strength effects and goal-pursuit experience effects was that strengthening (or weakening) engagement in a goal pursuit at Time 1 can also influence the value intensity of an object at Time 2 that is *totally separate* from the Time 1 activity.

In one study (Higgins et al., 2003), for example, participants were first asked to think about strategies for pursuing their personal goals (eager *vs.* vigilant) that either fit or did not fit their regulatory focus orientation (promotion *vs.* prevention). Later, they rated nice-looking dogs in terms of how "good-natured" they were. Compared to participants in the non-fit conditions at Time 1, participants in the fit conditions at Time 1 subsequently rated the dogs at Time 2 as being more "good-natured" overall. Thus, increasing strength of engagement through regulatory fit in one task activity (listing strategies for attaining personal goals) subsequently increased attraction toward an object in an entirely separate task (judging the good-naturedness of depicted

dogs). Using the same paradigm, Cesario et al. (2004) also found that after participants thought about strategies that did or did not fit their goal orientation, their subsequent evaluations of an unrelated persuasive message were intensified—more positive for those with a positive reaction to the message and more negative for those with a negative reaction to the message.

The final reason to emphasize the distinction between engagement strength effects and goal-pursuit experience effects was to focus on engagement strength as a *general mechanism* underlying value intensity. What made engagement strength a general mechanism was precisely the fact that it could have an effect on the value intensity of some target that was independent of the unique effects from the unique properties of each source of engagement strength. Each source of engagement strength has its own special experiential effects that derive from its own particular properties. To discuss engagement strength as a general mechanism, it is necessary to distinguish these special experiential effects of different sources of engagement strength from engagement strength's own general value intensification effect.

There were several reasons, then, to distinguish engagement strength effects and goal-pursuit experience effects. But it is now time to expand regulatory engagement theory to include a consideration of the special effects of specific sources of engagement strength regarding how the goal pursuit activity itself is experienced. After all, engagement strength does not stand alone as a solitary factor. There are always sources of engagement strength that contribute their own special effects. These sources are *inherently* part of the total value creation story. Thus, they need to be taken into account. Any attempt at persuasion or influence needs to consider what a particular source of engagement strength will add to the mix. Effective persuasion or influence, like good cooking, is *both a science and an art*. So too is value creation. In each case, you need to know not only the effects of general principles but also the effects of specific ingredients. And

*the magic is in the right combination.*

### Taking Goal-Pursuit Experiences Into Account

Let us begin by saying something about the ingredients—the specific sources of engagement strength. The first point to emphasize is that the experiences which are associated with each of the different sources are distinct. For example, the “feeling right” experience from regulatory fit is not, strictly speaking, the same experience as feeling morally or ethically right when using proper means. Yes, there is some kind of “rightness” that they have in common, and, “feeling right” from regulatory fit *can* be confused sometimes with feeling morally right (Camacho, Higgins, & Luger, 2003). Nonetheless, we believe that there is something distinct about these two experiences, with the experience of fit being more a feeling of “suitability,” like wearing clothes that fit (e.g., a custom-made suit), and using proper means being more a feeling of “correctness” or “appropriateness” (see March, 1994), like wearing the proper clothes for a specific occasion (e.g., beach party *vs.* funeral).

And each of these experiences is different from the experience people have when there is a high likelihood of some event occurring. When something is likely to happen (or *is* happening at the moment) people focus on it and prepare for it. Like people pursuing a goal in a manner that fits their orientation or their using proper means, preparing to engage in something that is likely to happen is what you “*should*” do. But not “should” as in “obligation,” but “should” as in what it “makes sense” to do (Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1989). What is about to happen (or is already happening) “feels real” (Higgins, 2009). This “feels real” is the distinctive experience of high likelihood as a source of engagement.

The “feels right” (or “feels suitable”) of regulatory fit, the “feels correct” (or “feels appropriate”) of using proper means, and the “feels real” of high likelihood are all distinct

positive experiences. And we believe that each of them is different from the positive experience of hedonic pleasure. For regulatory fit and for use of proper means, this assertion of distinctiveness has been tested and has received empirical support. We know from past research on regulatory fit (Cesario et al., 2004; Idson et al., 2004) and on the use of proper means (Higgins et al., 2008) that hedonic pleasure is just one source of engagement strength that creates a positive experience, and that its effect on goal pursuit is different from the positive experience of regulatory fit or the positive experience of using proper means. The differences among these kinds of positive experience from different sources of engagement strength need to be considered when planning persuasion and influence attempts. They are *not* the same kind of positive experience and the differences *matter*.

These distinct positive experiences from specific sources of engagement strength could affect persuasion and influence in different ways as a function of different mechanisms. One mechanism would be the quality of the experience itself. It has been recognized for some time that there is an experiential system that establishes reality independent from a rational or reflective system (e.g., Epstein, 1991; Freud, 1923; Strack, 1992; for reviews, see Strack & Deutsch, 2004; Strack, Werth, & Deutsch, 2006). Even without conscious awareness, this experiential system can differentiate among different qualities of positive experience and produce different psychological situations. There is substantial evidence, for example, that happiness as a “presence of positive” psychological situation is distinguished from calmness as an “absence of negative” psychological situation and is associated with different kinds of self-regulation (see, for example, Higgins, 1998). Similarly, “feels right,” “feels correct,” and “feels real” could involve different psychological situations and kinds of self-regulation that would impact persuasion and influence. It should be noted as well that these distinct positive

experiences could differ not only with respect to what psychological situation is associated with them but also with respect to what procedural strategies, tactics or behaviors are associated with them and become automatically activated. Future research needs to examine the functional differences among these feelings within the experiential system.

In addition to an experiential system mechanism, the distinct positive experiences from specific sources of engagement strength could affect persuasion and influence through a reflective-inferential mechanism, such as the “feelings as information” mechanism proposed by Schwarz and others (e.g., Schwarz, 1990; for reviews of inferences from feelings, see Pham, 2004, 2008; Schwarz & Clore, 1988; 1996). According to this mechanism, different inferences would be drawn from “This makes me feel pleasant,” “I feel right about what I am doing,” “This feels like the correct thing to do,” and “This feels real,” because each of these feelings has its own implications. And the different implications would impact persuasion and influence in different ways. This also needs to be examined in future research.

In sum, we believe that for sources of engagement strength that produce positive experiences of goal pursuit it is important to take into account the specific quality of positive experience that each source produces. Similarly, we believe that for sources of engagement strength that produce negative experiences of goal pursuit it is important to take into account the specific quality of negative experience that each source produces. Once again, one source of engagement strength that produces negative experiences of goal pursuit is hedonic—a painful or unpleasant event. Although a pleasant event typically strengthens engagement, a painful event can either strengthen or weaken engagement (Higgins, 2006). For example, if something painful requires sustained attention to take effective action, as can occur with something threatening, then it can strengthen engagement. For our purposes here, the point is simply that pain or

unpleasantness is one potential source of engagement strength and it produces a negative experience during the goal pursuit process.

Two other sources of engagement strength that produce negative experiences are opposing interfering forces and overcoming personal resistance. Although the ultimate experience of opposing or overcoming these forces may be affectively positive, the process experience of the interfering forces or of the resistance themselves is likely to be negative. With the exception of research on the cognitive dissonance experience that relates to overcoming personal resistance (e.g., Elliot & Devine, 1994; Higgins, Rhodewalt, & Zanna, 1979), little research attention has been paid to distinguishing between the negative experience produced by opposing interfering forces and the negative experience produced by overcoming personal resistance. Our intuition is that these negative experiences *are* different from one another and that each differs from hedonic pain. We believe that the experience of opposing interfering forces would combine feelings of “defiance” and “antagonism.” In contrast, we believe that the experience of overcoming personal resistance would combine feelings of “conflict” and “tension.” And, like the sources of engagement strength that produce positive experiences, these distinct negative experiences from specific sources of engagement strength could affect persuasion and influence in different ways as a function of either an experiential system mechanism or a reflective-inferential mechanism. Future research is also needed to investigate the different effects of these negative-experience sources of engagement strength.

Generally speaking, the effects on persuasion and influence from the distinct nature of the different positive-experience sources and negative-experience sources of engagement strength have yet to be investigated. The one exception is the distinct “feeling right” experience whose effects on persuasion and influence have begun to be investigated, as we discussed earlier (see

also Cesario, Higgins, & Scholer, 2008; Lee & Higgins, in press). Until we know more about the distinct effects of the different positive-experience and different negative-experience sources of engagement strength, it is difficult to discuss how they should be taken into account within consumer psychology. For the moment, then, let us just consider the simpler distinction between sources of engagement strength that produce generally positive versus generally negative experiences of the goal pursuit. Let us begin by considering the implications of a source of engagement strength that produces negative experiences of the goal pursuit activity.

As we have noted, factors that strengthen engagement can be unpleasant in and of themselves. For example, obstacles or difficulties encountered in goal pursuit are often experienced as aversive. Recall the participants in Fitzsimons and Lehman's (2004) reactance study who valued a chosen object more when they had to oppose an interfering force (a counter-recommendation from an expert). Although these participants showed an increase in outcome value, they also showed a *decrease* in *process* value, reporting less satisfaction with the decision process when an expert recommended against their dominant choice. This decrease in process value has implications of its own.

One implication of process value is that it can influence *how people feel about the object that is opposing them*. A salesclerk, for example, who is interfering with a customer's wishes, i.e., functioning as a barrier, could increase the attractiveness of some positive product if the customer opposes the interference. This could be a sly sales technique, as when parents attempt to use reactance as a tool to control their children's motivation. But, even if it works, it can make the customer (or child) annoyed at the salesclerk (or parent). In the case of the salesclerk (we leave the parent to your imagination), this could be a serious downside, especially if the relationship with the customer is not one-shot but has the potential to continue into future

interactions and future sales. Those future sales could be lost by frustrating or annoying the customer.

A second implication of process value derives from the fact that, as we mentioned earlier, a process factor has *two separate effects on the actor's experience of the goal pursuit activity*—a hedonic effect and a strength of engagement effect. In the above example, for instance, opposing the salesclerk's interference can strengthen the customer's engagement in the goal pursuit activity which can intensify attraction to the value target. But this opposition is an unpleasant goal pursuit experience and uses up resources. That is, *opposition is costly* to the customer. These costs become part of the benefits-costs analysis of the goal pursuit activity: Do I want to do this activity again? The customer could decide that the answer is “No!” and this by itself would damage future sales (over and above how the customer feels toward the salesclerk).

#### Combining Engagement and Experience Effects for the Case of Regulatory Fit

It would make sense, then, to think of ways to strengthen engagement without these potential downsides. After all, there are factors that can strengthen engagement that create positive experiences in and of themselves rather than negative experiences. Using proper means, for example, is likely to create a positive moral or ethical experience (see Haidt, 2001; Smith, 1759/1997). And regulatory fit makes people “feel right” about what they are doing (e.g., Appelt, Zou, Arora, & Higgins, in press; Camacho et al., 2003; Cesario et al., 2004; Higgins et al., 2003). In general, people would prefer to “feel right” than to “feel wrong.” In addition, it has been shown that the effect of regulatory fit on increasing value intensity from strengthening engagement is independent of people's personal experience of a goal pursuit activity. For instance, participants in a Cesario et al. (2004) study who had negative reactions to a persuasive message felt even more negatively towards the message under conditions of regulatory fit despite

their “feeling right” from regulatory fit.

The effect of regulatory fit on making people “feel right” should enhance their experience of the goal-pursuit process. It has been shown, for example, that regulatory fit can enhance emotional well-being (Grant, Higgins, Baer, & Bolger, 2009). Regulatory fit, then, could be used not only to intensify attraction toward some positive value target by strengthening engagement but also to reduce costs of the goal pursuit activity through creating a positive process experience.

What this suggests is that those who want to manage or influence other persons need to consider not only whether others’ engagement should be stronger or weaker but also the potential process costs and benefits from the different sources of strengthening or weakening engagement with respect to the experiences they would produce during the goal pursuit activity itself. And what you might prefer could be *any combination* of increasing attraction versus increasing repulsion, and having process benefits from a positive activity experience versus process costs from a negative activity experience. On the one hand, the combination of wanting to increase attraction toward a value target *and* wanting to have process benefits from a positive activity experience would make sense if the other person was your customer. On the other hand, the combination of wanting to increase repulsion from a value target *and* wanting to have process costs from a negative activity experience could make sense if the other person was a drug addict that you were treating.

How might the effects of sources of engagement strength on value target intensity and goal-pursuit activity experience be combined? Consider the case of a father who is basically in favor of buying life insurance but has some ambivalence because it makes him feel anxious to think about his ultimate demise. What is needed is to strengthen engagement to intensify his

favorable reaction to buying life insurance *and* to do it in a manner that will make him feel less anxious about it. Enter regulatory fit as the source of the moment. Regulatory fit makes people “feel right” about what they are doing. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, there is evidence that the more that people deal with emotional problems in a regulatory fit manner, the better they feel (Grant et al., 2009). Thus, regulatory fit is probably the best source of engagement strength to solve this particular consumer problem.

It should also be noted, as we briefly mentioned earlier, that you might not always want to intensify attraction toward something or repulsion from something. Instead, you might want to *de-intensify* attraction or repulsion. When treating a drug addict, for example, you might have to *decrease* their attraction toward their addiction before you can *increase* their repulsion. In the case of phobics, you would want to de-intensify their repulsion (e.g., to snakes or spiders). If you want to de-intensify the value of something, you should intervene with factors that *weaken* engagement strength. Engagement strength could be weakened, for example, by creating conditions of non-fit, such as having promotion dominant individuals pursue their goal in a vigilant manner or prevention dominant individuals pursue their goal in an eager manner.

A consumer example of using non-fit as a tool might be to have people, under conditions of non-fit, think about the reasons why they have *not* purchased “green” products in the past. The non-fit could have two, and perhaps even three, desirable effects. First, non-fit would weaken engagement and thus decrease the attractiveness of the reasons for not purchasing “green” products. Second, the process of pursuing reasons *not* to purchase “green” products would feel negative, i.e., costly, and thus not worth doing in the future. Third, non-fit would make the process experience “feel wrong”, which would provide the information that thinking of reasons for not purchasing “green” products is “wrong”—a possible “feelings as information” third

factor (see Schwarz & Clore, 1996).

In sum, when attempting to influence someone's attitude and behavior, there are a wide variety of possible ways in which different factors could be used to either strengthen or weaken engagement strength while, at the same time, creating positive or negative process experiences of the goal pursuit activity itself. Which factors should be used to create which combination of engagement strength and process experience would depend on the specific goal of the influence attempt. The process implications of regulatory engagement theory for influencing both a goal object's value intensity and the experiential quality of the goal pursuit activity itself have the potential for creating a new toolbox of persuasion and influence techniques. The "art of engaging the customer" can take on a whole new meaning.

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Figure 1

