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## Daring to Dream the Impossible Dream: An Identity-Based Motivation and Goal Setting Intervention for Aspiring First Generation College Students

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## Abstract

Little can be predicted about what the jobs of the future may look like. The most likely path to success, though, is through a college education. College not only provides graduates high salaries and more job stability, it also develops critical thinking, enhances relationship skills, and is correlated with increased well-being. Unfortunately, college access is not equal. First generation college students, students of color, and students living in poverty are not as likely to attend and graduate from college. GPA and test scores can predict 25% of college success; the remaining 75% is unknown. This paper posits that part of that gap can be explained by social emotional skills. The paper begins with an overview of positive psychology and refutes the arguments against it, then narrows to discuss the role of positive psychology in education. While many avenues of positive psychology can be used in education, this paper focuses on prospective selves, goal-setting, and implementation interventions as a means to drive college motivation and academic behaviors and develops a two day intervention for approximately 1,100 ninth grade students in the Uplift Education charter network. This paper sets up the intervention and proposes ways to measure the outcomes. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the implications for education equality in America.

## Keywords

Prospective Selves, Implementation Interventions, Goal Setting, First Generation, Students of Color, Charter Schools, College Access. Identity Based Motivation, Prospective Selves Positive Education, Positive Psychology

## Disciplines

Educational Psychology | Psychology

Daring to Dream the Impossible Dream:

An Identity-Based Motivation and Goal Setting Intervention for Aspiring First Generation

College Students

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An Identity-Based Motivation and Goal Setting Intervention for Aspiring First Generation  
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Abstract

Little can be predicted about what the jobs of the future may look like. The most likely path to success, though, is through a college education. College not only provides graduates high salaries and more job stability, it also develops critical thinking, enhances relationship skills, and is correlated with increased well-being. Unfortunately, college access is not equal. First generation college students, students of color, and students living in poverty are not as likely to attend and graduate from college. GPA and test scores can predict 25% of college success; the remaining 75% is unknown. This paper posits that part of that gap can be explained by social emotional skills. The paper begins with an overview of positive psychology and refutes the arguments against it, then narrows to discuss the role of positive psychology in education. While many avenues of positive psychology can be used in education, this paper focuses on prospective selves, goal-setting, and implementation interventions as a means to drive college motivation and academic behaviors and develops a two day intervention for approximately 1,100 ninth grade students in the Uplift Education charter network. This paper sets up the intervention and proposes ways to measure the outcomes. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the implications for education equality in America.

## **Overview of Positive Psychology**

### **An Introduction**

At the end of the 20th century, Martin Seligman (1999) introduced a reorientation towards the positive in psychology during his President's address to the American Psychological Association. Seligman noted that, since World War II, psychology has been focused on healing abnormalities and psychopathologies, not increasing well-being. The disease model focus was not without benefits; 14 mental illnesses can be effectively treated which we could not 50 years ago (Seligman, 1999). However, the disproportionate emphasis on prevention and treatment have resulted in a neglect of the aspects of psychology which might nurture human strengths and encourage human flourishing. Seligman (1999) passionately appealed to the association to reframe the conversation to include what makes life worth living. A new field of study, positive psychology, was born (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The field of positive psychology has grown enormously in the last fifteen years. Between 2000 and 2010, 1,000 articles related to the field were published in peer-reviewed journals (Azar, 2011). There is a high demand in the non-academic market as well. Positive psychology has been featured in the popular press, making the cover of Time (Jan. 17, 2005), and featured in The Washington Post (2002), the London Sunday Times Magazine (2005), The New York Times Magazine (2006), and U.S. News & World Report (2009). Dozens of scientific and popular books have been published (Azar, 2011). The University of Pennsylvania offers a master degree program specifically devoted to the study of positive psychology, which is now emulated in multiple universities in the US, and in Australia and England. Seligman, empowered by the new research and the inspired by the rapid success of the field, endeavored to set a goal that 51% of the world's population should be flourishing by the year 2051 (Seligman, 2011).

The fundamental questions asked by positive psychologists surround what constitutes a good life and leads to human flourishing. Specifically, Seligman (1999), Csikszentmihalyi (2002), Diener (2002), and Valiant (2002), the fathers of Positive Psychology, shifted focus to positive constructs such as “hope, wisdom, creativity, future mindedness, courage, spirituality, responsibility, and perseverance” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). These same questions and constructs have been examined by philosophers, written about by authors, explored by theologians, and expressed by musicians and artists. Issues of happiness, wellbeing, and flourishing are so essential to the human condition that they are not the purview of one discipline of study, rather the essential essence of what it means to be human (Pawelski & Moores, 2013). Positive psychology has added to the interdisciplinary conversation about wellbeing in two ways: it has encouraged theories redefining what it means to live well and it has created interventions that are empirically sound.

There are many competing and complementary theories of wellbeing. One theory, I COPPE resonates because of its inclusivity of multiple domains (Prilleltensky, 2012). Unlike others, this theory considers the physical, mental, and community aspects of flourishing. Wellbeing expands passed the individual to include a positive state of affairs for “individuals, relationships, organizations, communities, and the natural environment” (2012, p.3). Prilleltensky (2012), an advocate for positive psychology from the community perspective, defines flourishing through I COPPE: interpersonal, community, occupational, physical, psychological, and economic wellbeing. Interpersonal wellbeing addresses how one can resolve conflict and develop positive relationships, while community wellbeing addresses fostering positive culture and connecting individuals to society. Prilleltensky (2012) defines occupational wellbeing as using strengths to obtain consistent and meaningful employment. Recent research

has connected the wellbeing of the mind to the wellbeing of the body (Rath & Harter, 2010; Ratey & Manning, 2014; Prilleltensky, 2012). Prilleltensky (2012) includes this connection through his inclusion of physical wellbeing – health, the absence of disease, and optimal functioning of the body. The psychological elements of wellbeing, such as coping with stress, avoiding anxiety and depression, and fostering positive emotions are covered within psychological wellbeing. Lastly, economic well-being cannot be dismissed. While money does not lead to happiness, there is a certain threshold that must be obtained to foster wellbeing (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002). While there are other models, this model is the most inclusive and all-encompassing.

Second, positive psychology differs from other lines of inquiry into wellbeing because it applies a scientific rigor to the study of the field. Positive psychologists test hypotheses and interventions through experiments in an attempt to enable happiness, effect self-determination and self-regulation, encourage optimism and hope, measure positive emotion, and develop talent and creativity (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The claims made by positive psychologists are subject to academic scrutiny, re-testability, and peer-reviewed critiques (Brown, Sokal, & Friedman, 2013; Fredrickson, 2013).

Seligman's (2011) goal to have 51% of the population flourishing by 2051 will require that positive psychology disseminate through many fields. One way to influence a large section of the population is to incorporate positive psychology into education. Historically, education has been concerned with imbuing the principles of wellbeing to the young. Plato believed that the purpose of education is a means to instill virtue in the young so that they may lead productive, meaningful, and virtuous lives (Plato, ~400 BCE/1997). In more modern times, schools became not only the means of academic knowledge transfer, but also the primary

cultural institution responsible for attending to the moral and social needs of students (Elias, Parker, Kash, Weissberg, & O'Brien, 2008). Seligman's call to reorient psychology to the positive resonated within the field of education and awoke a new movement to focus on wellbeing in schools. Looking at the I COPPE model can help educators focus on how they can empower students to work towards wellbeing. Additionally, many positive psychology interventions have been directed towards students. We can apply positive psychology interventions in a school context to cultivate in our children the skills and the mindsets to help them to live well. Positive psychology offers a "scientifically validated approach" to meet the goals of educators (Waters, 2011, p. 87). Through sound research, evidence supports that positive education programs can lead to an increase in academic achievement, improved social interactions, and decreased emotional distress, alcohol and drug use, violence, truancy, bullying, and conduct problems (Gillham et al., 2013; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1997; Wilson, Gottfredson, & Najaka, 2001; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Education is a natural fit for positive psychology.

### **Arguments against Positive Psychology**

The field of Positive Psychology is not without criticism. The first critique is that there is no need for a separate field. Psychology is supposed to study both the maladaptive and adaptive behaviors and emotions of humankind, therefore the addition of positive psychology is redundant (Galbe & Haidt, 2005). Even prominent researchers in positive psychology have questioned the need for the field. For example, Sonja Lyubormirsky, author of *The How of Happiness* (2007), has questions whether a separate field is even needed since Seligman's call to action mobilized researchers housed in psychology departments across the US (Azar, 2011).



The fact that the movement has gained so much attention emphasizes the fact that the field is needed. These questions were not widely studied prior to forming positive psychology. While the questions were being asked by different psychologists, their work was not united by a common cause. Putting a name of something is one step in gaining publicity. Conferences and associations dedicated to human flourishing, such as the International Positive Psychology Association and the International Positive Education Network, have formed under the idea that the positive is different from traditional psychology. Additionally, psychology is a very successful field both in terms of outcomes and interest, but has been thoroughly invested in the neutral and the negative. Psychology has become the study of problems and the adjustments needed to make things right. Positive psychology seeks not to stigmatize and focus on problems, rather to study what is good and spread knowledge about how to obtain that. A shift as extreme as the movement of positive psychology calls for a new name.

Furthermore, the creation of the field of positive psychology has reinvigorated other fields to reorient towards the positive. As mentioned above, positive psychology has impacted educators. Discussions about the purpose of education are now common in teachers' lounges and school board meetings. Research into the application of positive psychology into schools is met with enthusiasm. While traditional psychology has a place in schools, it is often the purview of the counseling team and not integrated fully into the culture. Declaring positive psychology as a new field created inroads into full school integration and inspired new excitement around the topic.

The second argument against positive psychology is that it glorifies the positive without the recognition of the role of the negative (Gable & Haidt, 2005). One example where the criticism is demonstrated most clearly is in the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness

program (Harms, Herian, Krasikova, Vanhove, & Lester, 2013). This program is intended to build resilience in the Army so soldiers can complete their missions and integrate back into society with ease. While the results of the program are mixed, the backlash to the program has been extreme (Harms et al., 2013). Sean Phipps (2011) argues that this program can inculcate soldiers against battle stress, but perhaps this is not an end we should seek. Stress, distress, and repugnance are natural responses. By eliminating this response, we may be robbing our soldiers of their very humanity. The same claim has been made about positive psychology as a whole. Positive psychology could be focused on the positive at the expense of the negative.

Negative emotions have a role in human development and the human experience. Without negative emotions, the positive would feel inconsequential. Positive Psychology does not seek to eliminate these experiences, but to provide tools to grapple with the negative while enhancing the positive experience.

The application of positive psychology in education illustrates how the field combines both the negative and the positive. Students with emotional and behavioral issues are often regulated to the counselor's office, while students without crisis situation are not given access to psychological care. Due to the education reforms in No Child Left Behind, school counselors face pressure to provide evidence that demonstrates how their programs and services directly contribute to academic success or risk facing cuts (Bemak, Willians, & Chung, 2014). To make the greatest impact, professional school counseling groups recommend that counselors focus solely on students with extremely low grade, poor attendance, high disciplinary referrals, and multiple suspensions (Bemak et al., 2014). Students who do not fit this profile are not without struggles, though. Positive psychology can be integrated into classroom environments to help all students deal with common stress, such as academic and social pressure. Teacher can lead

positive psychology interventions which help students cope with stress and increase their chances of success.

Lastly, positive psychology has been critiqued as a field that addresses the needs of upper middle class American whites only (Becker & Marecek, 2008). The field was started by four white men. When Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) published the special APA report introducing Positive Psychology, Gonzalo Bacigalupe (2001) replied with searing comments about the homogeneity of the studies. He questioned the founders of the field's lack of diversity, saying "is it possible that there are no seasoned scholars of color or perspectives that use a positive psychology framework to speak about nondominant groups in the United States?" (Bacigalupe, 2001). Others challenge that the field seeks to talk about resilience and flourishing without recognizing the institutional structures that some in our society face. In her book *Bright-Sided*, Barbara Ehrenreich (2009) argues the positive psychology can be interpreted as a prescriptive science that claims to make everything better with a positive attitude. The poor should just develop more positive emotions and habits to overcome their hardships. Those who experience racism should simply become more assertive and resilient. Positive psychology simplifies a complex web of human interactions and hardships that lead to suffering and flourishing. It puts too much onus on the individual. It risks creating a "blame the victim" attitude and a "justify the oppressive system" approach (Ehrenreich, 2009). Becker and Marecek (2008) claim that positive psychology looks only at the individual in isolation. To them:

"(Positive psychology) does not include the interrogation of power, privilege, and social hierarchy as part of the agenda of positive psychology. They (positive psychologists) do not discuss how these might have anything to do with visions of the good life or with who can or cannot attain it. Nor do they express concern that

some segments of the population may ‘flourish’ at the expense of others.” (p. 596)

It may be a valid assertion that the field of positive psychology began as the study of the individual. Peterson’s and Seligman’s (2004) first venture into the field was to classify individual character strengths and virtues from across the globe. They did this in attempt to see how one could recognize and grow strengths. Additionally, initial research in to positive psychology focused on and appealed to well-educated whites in America. Now, though, the field has taken a broader approach to the role of well-being in society. It has started to venture into domains of community and justice. Education, again, can apply the research of positive psychology in order to close achievement gaps and spread the science of wellbeing. It does not have to be relocated to wealthy, white private schools. It can be used as a tool to create social change and disseminate positive psychology to traditionally underserved populations. In the next section, I will examine one institution that often does not equally serve its constituents – education. I will address how access to a college education can greatly enhance wellbeing, but access to quality education and college is not equal.

### **College Access and Positive Psychology**

#### **Why College?**

The American dream is one of opportunity and advancement. Parents dream that their children will have more opportunities, more success, and more happiness than they do. Often this dream includes a college education. Many parents know that college not only provides a foundation for career advancement, it is also a time for students to discover themselves. Research indicates that college provides more financial opportunities, increases job stability, and enhances overall wellbeing.

Obtaining a college education can have a significant financial impact on a person's life, which impacts economic wellbeing. Unfortunately, high school degrees are no longer viable for financial success. According to The Condition of Education 2014 young adults age 20-34 who received a high school diploma earned approximately \$7,100 more a year than high school drop outs (Kena et al., 2014). Furthermore, youth who went on to earn a bachelor's degree earned double than their drop out peers (\$46,900 vs. \$22,900) and more than adults who just obtained a high school diploma (\$46,900 vs. \$30,000). Adults who continue their education and earn Master's degrees or higher make median income of \$59,600 a year. These earning differences remain valid across sex and racial groups, although young adult males make more than young adult females of equal educational attainment at every level (Kena et al., 2014).

Recent media attention has highlighted the increasing cost of college (Arnold, 2011; Leonhardt, 2014). The College Board, the organization responsible for developing the SAT, AP, and other college and post-bachelorette test, conducts research on the cost of college every year. Accounting for inflation, the cost of attending a four year public school has increased 225%, from \$2,810 in 1984-85 to \$9,139 in 2014-15 and 146% from \$12,716 to \$31,231 (College Board, 2010). The rise in the cost of higher education has made it more difficult for students and families to afford education, but the cost of college does not offset the potential benefits of having a degree. Researchers have shown that the net cost of a college degree is negative \$500,000 when accounting for the income gap, inflation, and the true cost of college (Autor, 2014).

Adults who have a bachelor's degree or higher also have more job stability. In 2013, the unemployment rate for young adults who completed a bachelor's degree or higher was 7% compared to 12.2% for those with some college education, 17.5% for those whose highest level

of education was high school completion, and 29.2% for those who did not complete high school (Kena, et al, 2014). During the recession between 2008 and 2013, many argued that a college degree did not protect against unemployment and, in fact, college degree earners were unemployed and stifled with debt (Leonhardt, 2014). While unemployment increased in all sections, the unemployment rate increased less for those who obtained at least a bachelor's degree than for those who had less education (Kena, et al, 2014).

Having access and obtaining a college degree can have a significant impact on the economic aspect of the I COPPE model and potentially impact overall wellbeing. Graduation from college has been correlated with having higher engagement in civic activities, higher rates of living healthy life styles such as not smoking, not abusing drugs and alcohol, and lower levels of obesity, and increased engagement in their children's' education (College Board, 2010). Higher education can cause an upward spiral in many domains of life. Let's look at an example to see how education can impact all aspects of I COPPE. Consider two students, David and James. David did not attend a school that inspired him and did not adequately prepare him to find a good job or attend college. He finds meaning in his family. While the job is pays a decent amount, money is constantly a concern and often bills are left unpaid (economic wellbeing). Supporting his family is a constant source of emotional stress and increases his anxiety (psychological wellbeing). Because of the stress, anxiety, and lack of sleep (physical wellbeing), David's relationships with his wife and children are strained (interpersonal wellbeing). He begins to feel like a failure and distances himself from his friends and brothers, who seem to be much more successful and happy (community wellbeing). On the other hand, James attends a rigorous high school and experiments with STEM classes and joins the robotics club. He is accepted to a great college and becomes an engineer. His job doesn't seem like a job, but rather

a calling. He comes home almost every day with a smile on his face, which positively impacts his family relationships. Money will always be a concern, but he has enough to feed his family and his children never truly want for anything. He lives near a gourmet grocery store and his cabinets are filled with healthy food and snacks. While this may sound trite, its potential is evidence of the upward spiral effects that education can have on a person's life. All students who go to college are not guaranteed wellbeing and happiness, but college creates more opportunities for students to find these.

### **Unequal Access**

Unfortunately, the state of American public education, and therefore access to college, is anything but equal. First, students face hurdles graduating from high school. Of those who graduate from high school, only 66% enroll in college (Kena et al., 2014). And, in total, only 59% of first-time, full-time 4-year college students who started in 2006 graduated with a four year degree by 2012 (Kena et al., 2014). While these numbers are staggering, the inequality becomes more apparent when we consider how race, parents' income, parents' education level, school choice, primary school performance, secondary school performance, access to college counseling, and peer support can negatively or positively impact the likelihood of applying to, matriculating into, persisting in, and graduating from college. A person's actions may not be the biggest factor in obtaining a college degree. In order to create interventions to help students enter college, we must first understand who is most at risk and why.

Of all these factors, one sub-group is at the most risk for not graduating from college – first generation college students (first-gens) (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Patrick, 2004). The parents of first-gens did not attend school beyond high school. While first-generation college students can come from any race or income level, the majority of first-gens are

overrepresented among underrepresented minority groups and received free or reduced lunch prices at school (Engle, 2007; NCES, 2012). Potential college students who would be first generation college students are at a distinct disadvantage compared to their peers in terms of academic preparation, level of family income and financial support, degree expectations, and college application process knowledge (Choy, 2001; Engel, 2007). If a first generation college student enrolls in college, the student tends to have a harder time matriculating into college (Rendon, Hope, & Associates, 1996). In addition to transition issues encountered by all students, first gens experience significantly more social and academic hurdles (Terenzini et al., 1996). These obstacles have significant effects on the likelihood of a first generation college student successfully graduation from college. Only 11% of potential first generation college students graduate within 6 years of completing high school (Engle, & Tinto, 2008).

And, yet, it is exactly these students who can benefit the most from obtaining a college degree. First generation students who earn a college degree from a selective university earn substantially more than their peers who do not attend college (Pascarella, & Terenzini, 2005). This difference outpaces continuing-generation counterparts. The effect of college education income can have more of an impact on a family in poverty than one in the middle or upper class. Education is the best way to end the cycle of poverty, but we are failing to adequately prepare students for college, especially potential first generation college students.

### **What is College Readiness?**

Students' college readiness is commonly assessed by two factors: grade point average and college readiness test scores. Mainstream education in America focuses on skills and knowledge acquisition (Conley, 2010). Education policy initiatives, such as the Common Core, create standards which all children are supposed to meet (Conley, 2014). The assumption is that



if a student is on grade level and meets the requirements, he or she will be ready for college, career, and life. The Common Core is research based and integrates the most up-to-date thinking on college and career readiness standards. The new set of standards was reviewed by both secondary and post-secondary instructional leaders (Conley, 2014). Furthermore, the curriculum aligns with college readiness assessment tests such as the ACT and SAT, the second standard college readiness benchmark. The assumption of the education system and college admissions is that a student meeting benchmarks for high school GPA and testing standards has acquired content knowledge and basic academic skills that provide the foundation needed for a success in college.

GPA and test scores explain a small part of college success. GPA and ACT scores account for 25% of the variance in first year college students' GPAs and SAT scores have the similar effects (Mouw, & Khanna, 1993; Hezlett, 2001). GPAs and ACT/SAT scores are not the only predictors for college success, especially among first generation college students (College Board, 2005). We track GPA and test score, but because they account for such a small percent of variance, there are other factors that require exploration.

One explanation of the variance could be a difference in academic behaviors. These behaviors are developed in middle and high school, but carry through to college. A study by Terenzini (1996) showed that first-gens study less, complete fewer freshman year credit hours, take fewer humanities and fine arts classes, participate less in honors programs, are less likely to ask for help, are more likely to work off campus, and are less likely to engage in campus activities. There are a growing number of college access and success programs that work with potential first-generation college students (Engle, 2007). These programs aim to increase college awareness and preparation, provide counseling, tutoring, and mentoring, and teach about the

college admissions process. The data supports that these programs have a positive but small effect on first-gens (Engle, 2007).

Directly addressing academic behaviors may be one route to closing the 75% variance, but since these programs show only slight improvement, they will not close the entire gap. Part of the explanation could be that even if students have the skills and knowledge to perform academic behaviors, they do not see the value in these tasks. In order for a student to complete high achieving academic behaviors, the student must be motivated to do so. A lack of motivation may partially be attributed to the students' perceptions of what is possible for themselves and people like them in the future (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). First generation college students may not see college as an option or a reality because it conflicts with what they believe is achievable for people who share their socio-economic status, so the value of academic behaviors decreases. This theory, known as identity-based motivation, assumes that students view circumstances and difficulties through the lens of their currently active identities and favor identity-congruent actions to identity-incongruent actions (Oyserman, 2007). When action feels identity-incongruent, encountering an obstacle suggests that the behavior is pointless and not for people like me (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). For example, when a potential first generation college student struggles to self-regulate and study, he may interpret the struggle as indicative that he is not college material. Building the concept of a college-going identity may be essential to encouraging persistence through academic struggles that will lead to college acceptance and graduation (Savitz-Romer & Bouffard, 2012). There are a variety of interventions that help students reconcile college-going identities with stereotypes, realities and cultural belonging and the effects of these interventions have been measured for up to two years following the intervention (Oyserman & Destin, 2010).

Dreams do not necessarily result in increased academic behavior and a college-going identity alone is not enough. Many students with college aspiration do not take sufficient action to work toward their school goals (Oyserman, 2013). In order to fully commit to a goal, one must act accordingly. There are useful interventions that not only help students commit to a goal, but also help them plan how to overcome obstacles to achieving the goal. The use of goal setting and implementation intention interventions has been shown to enhance the self-regulation needed to perform academic behaviors (Duckworth, Grant, Loew, Oettingen, & Gollwitzer, 2011). While the effects of the intervention have been documented, the duration of effect is relatively short-lived (Duckworth et al., 2011).

Identity interventions and goal setting interventions have been shown to independently affect college going motivation and academic behaviors. The effect of these interventions may be greatly enhanced by combining the interventions. If a student can reconcile conflicts to his academic and college going identity, therefore enhancing college motivation, and then immediately sets a college going goal and is given tools to overcome and persist through obstacles, the effects of the intervention may be greater and longer lasting.

I recommend that, in order to close the gap, we need to focus on building academic and college going identity through goal setting with first generation students. In the next section, I will review the literature that supports these claims.

### **Self-Efficacy, Identity-Based Motivation, and Goal Setting**

Research indicates that there are many reasons why first generation college students may not succeed in college. It might not seem like an option because, while they can cognitively understand going, they cannot imagine themselves in a strange place. Alternatively, it might not seem like something that “their people” do. Students whose parents have a college education

tend to experience “college as a continuation” of their academic and social experiences in high school, while going to college often constitutes a disjunction in the lives of first-generation students” (Engle, 2007, p.33). Many may simply not see themselves as college going material. Other first generation students aspire to go to college, but do not pursue the goal through self-regulation and academic effort (Oyserman, 2013). For these students, they may be dissuaded from achieving their goal to due to motivational issues. In a school setting, it is difficult to craft individual interventions that may meet the individual needs of each child. This section addresses key areas of motivation – vicarious learning, self-efficacy, identity based motivation, and goal setting – in an attempt to create a research based mega intervention that can appeal to a wide variety of first generation students.

Bandura’s (1977, 1997, 2001) social cognitive theory of motivation illustrates how one’s view of the self and of society can help shape motivation and goals. Bandura focuses on three modalities of motivation; symbolic, vicarious, and self-regulatory processes.

Symbolic processes refer to how we learn through our own experiences and make predictions based on future success based on the outcomes (Bandura, 1986). For example, if I earn excellent grades in school, I can predict that I will do well in college. On the other hand, if a student struggles in school, he may assume that he will not be successful in future academic environments. This is also referred to as enactive learning. Here, we see how students can internalize failure and make premature decisions about future success. These conclusions may be made even more prematurely by first generation students because of that they have learned vicariously.

Vicarious learning happens through observing the outcomes of others’ efforts and behaviors (Bandura, 1986). We see how they are rewarded or punished and make predictions of

our own outcomes based on their results. Vicarious learning has huge implications for first generation college students. If a first gen does not know anyone who has ever attended college, he or she may believe that people like them do not go to college. Furthermore, first generation students have a high dropout rate (Kena et al., 2014). This may reinforce the belief for younger students that people like them do not belong in college. By looking at the vicarious experiences, first gens may assess that they do not have the self-efficacy to succeed in college.

Self-efficacy is the belief that a person will achieve a goal (Bandura, 1977). It's a personal assessment of the potential for success. It encompasses both the internal and external factors that may lead to success. A person learns, over time and through experience, that he or she has agency and can actively shape his or her environment. Self-efficacy is more than the perception of skill (Maddux, 2002). It recognizes the importance of using a skill at a particular time within a specific set of circumstances.

Symbolic process and vicarious learning build self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). The conclusions about self-efficacy made through these processes can influence self-regulation. For example, because self-efficacy beliefs are developed over time and through experience, when a person self-regulates their behavior, s/he internalized his or her own agency over situation. High self-efficacy leads to greater confidence, which allows people to set higher and more difficult goals. Self-efficacy beliefs influence people to be more resilient since obstacles are setbacks and not indicative of failure (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Self-efficacy beliefs work in concert with goal setting to influence how people motivate themselves, overcome obstacles, and succeed (Bandura & Locke, 2003).

In order for an intervention to be successful to a wide audience of first gens, it must appeal to each element of social cognitive theory. Students must be able to make connections to

their strengths and past work to provide credence to symbolic processes. First gens needs to be exposed to college students who are successful. This may help students vicariously learn that even if the system is not set up to help them succeed, they can still reach a college going goal. Furthermore, to increase self-efficacy, first gens need to be exposed to students who have struggled and still persisted to reinforce that struggle is normal. This normalization of effort will help build self-efficacy.

Bandura's (1986) theory can be applied to all students aspiring to college. In the case of first generation students, there may be something deeper at the heart of the problem. Perhaps there is an essential conflict between the part of themselves that aspires toward college and the part of themselves that identifies closely with a culture that does not prioritize education. Identity-based motivation and perspective self-interventions can help address way to overcome negative assumptions towards college motivation and success that may have been vicariously learned (Oyserman & Harrison, 1998).

In order for first generation college students to commit to a goal of attending college and act in a motivated way, they must be able to imagine themselves placed within a college setting. This means they must be able to reconcile both their personal identities, strengths, and weaknesses (self-efficacy) with a college going identity and their cultural and socioeconomic identities with a system that will allow for college access (instrumentality). First generation students are less likely to have visited a college campus, discussed college with family, heard stories of other's college experiences, and known someone aside from a teacher who has a college degree (Uplift Education survey, 2014). Therefore, while cognitively capable of imagining college, they may not be connecting with this version of their future possible self. A possible self is an image of one's future (Oyserman & James, 2011). Students build possible

selves by “synthesizing what they know about their traits and abilities and what they know of the skills needed to become future selves” (Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002). While different from goals because they are less concrete, possible selves often inspire goals and are motivating (Moretti and Higgins, 1990; Oyserman and Markus, 1990). Students who have future possible selves that are focused on academic achievement are at reduced risk of involvement in delinquent activities (Oyserman and Markus, 1990), attain better grades (Oyserman and Harrison, 1998), and feel more connected to school (Oyserman and Harrison, 1998).

Future possible selves must be congruent with a student’s identity in order to be motivating. Oyserman and Destin (2010) refer to this theory as identity-based motivation, as mentioned above. A student’s identity, or self-concept, is comprised of social and personal past-, present-, and future, selves. These versions of the self can influence how people behave and how they interpret the world around them. Students are not often cognitively aware of these identities. For example, a first generation student who does not know anyone who has graduated from college may not articulate that he does not have a college-going future self, but this unspoken identity may influence his behavior. If he fails a test or experiences discrimination in a school setting, he may interpret this as evidence that college is not in his future. The effect of situational influences and their consequences are often subtle and not expressed. Fortunately, identities are context dependent and highly malleable. Situations and experiences can have large impacts on students’ future identities and behaviors (Oyserman and Destin, 2010). Interventions can be done to help students integrate parts of their identity into a college going identity. The most successful interventions include having students talk to support systems who believe in their college goals, having students discuss identity conflicts, exposing students to like them who are or who have graduated from college, and having students write about perspective selves

(Oyserman, & Harrison, 1998; Oyserman, & Markus, 1990; Oyserman et al., 2002; Oyserman, & Destin, 2010; Oyserman, 2013).

Identity can help with college motivated behaviors, but will be more effective when paired with strong goal setting interventions. Locke (1996) states that a goal, or the desired purpose of a specific action, is the motivator that drives us to action. Just as possible self, setting a specific and feasible goal can be a motivator. After condensing years of research, Locke and Latham (1990) define four key attributes to goals: clarity, challenge, simplicity, and commitment. Specific goals allow us to plan, measure, elicit feedback, recognize, and celebrate increments of success (Locke, 1996). Goals that stretch us allow us to feel a sense of accomplishment, develop self-discipline, and self-regulation (Locke, 1996). Clear goals allow for monitoring progress, recognizing success, and receiving constructive criticism which allows one to stay focused and motivated and also adjust the strategies, where needed, to achieve a goal (Locke, 1996). The goals set need to appeal to students' perspective sense of self, enhance self-determination and instrumentality, increase self-efficacy, and included systems to ensure success.

Once the goal is set, the work of achieving the goal takes place. Goal striving can be operationalized as "getting started, staying on track, calling a halt, and not overextending oneself" (Servincer, Busatta & Oettingen, 2014, p. 126). Commitment, self-regulation, and self-efficacy contribute to success in the goal striving stage.

Indeed, self-regulation is needed to achieve a goal. According to Baumeister, Failliot, DeWall, and Oaten (2006), self-regulation can be used to help a person achieve a long-term goal by helping a person to avoid or pursue specific impulses, thoughts, feelings. Self-regulation is best described as a muscle because it can experience fatigue and suffer from ego depletion, and it



can be strengthened over time through repetitive use. For example, when a person uses self-control in one task, s/he tends to exhibit less self-regulation in the task that immediately follows. This indicates that self-regulation is a limited resource. On the other hand, when a person exhibits self-control repeatedly, it become easier for that person to use self-control in the future and in other aspects of his or her life, meaning self-regulation can be developed (Baumeister et al., 2006). Students who self-regulate will likely have more success towards their goal. This will create a reaffirming feedback loop. Small successes will increase self-efficacy beliefs, affirm future prospective selves and, in doing so, reinforce self-regulation, which will, again, make progress toward the goal more likely.

Setting strong goals and developing skills needed to continue to pursue goals in the face of obstacles enhances the likelihood that the goal will be attained. While the goal is the catalyst for action, the process of setting the goal and the process of cultivating the right feelings surround the goal prime us for success (Locke, 1996).

Research indicates that goal setting can have potent effects in academic environments. Specifically, Morisona, Hirsch, Peterson, Phil, and Shore (2010) found that goal setting programs can influence academic achievement and college persistence. Positive feedback loops for self-efficacy, goal commitment, and self-regulation are developed in academic goal setting interventions (Morisona, Hirsch, Peterson, Phil, & Shore, 2010). Wigfield and Eccles (2000) highlight that not only is a clear goal important for initial motivation, but one must specify a path to reach the goal.

There are a variety of goal setting interventions that have been developed. Mental Contrasting and Implementation Intentions are vehicles to help with both goal setting and goal striving (Gollwitzer & Oettingen, 2011; Servincer, Busatta & Oettingen, 2014).

During the goal setting process, there are three modes of thought: mental contrasting, indulging, and dwelling (Servincer et al., 2014). Goal setting that focuses only on the positive, or indulging, limits thinking to time when the goal is achieved. Dwelling focuses on the difference in reality between the ideal state and the current state. Both dwelling and indulging lead to inaccurate assessments of expectancy, creating low commitment and inaccurate estimates of self-efficacy (Servincer et al., 2014). Conversely, mental contrasting, or engagement in limited indulging and limited dwelling creates higher commitment, accurate self-efficacy, and realistic goals, which can impact attainment (Servincer et al., 2014). When developing goal setting interventions, one should spend equal time fantasizing about the potential result and exploring possible obstacles. Thinking about what could go right and what could go wrong can provide one with the energy needed to achieve goals (Servincer et al., 2014).

As previously mentioned, setting a goal that is feasible, desirable, and reconciled with one's concept of self is the first step. The second step is to think about implementation intentions (Gollwitzer & Oettingen, 2011). In this process, students are instructed to identify a specific obstacle that could stand in the way of the goal and create if/then statements to overcome the obstacle. By engaging in this activity, students activate implementation thinking, which is associated with better task performance, more effective self-regulation, and better outcomes (Gollwitzer & Oettingen, 2011). Energy towards the goal can be increased (Gollwitzer & Oettingen, 2011). Furthermore, if/then planning has been shown to be successful in breaking specific habits (Gollwitzer & Oettingen, 2011).

It should be noted that implementation intentions work best when one is committed to the original goal and feels a high degree of self-efficacy. Combining mental contrasting and implementation intentions (MCII) has been demonstrated to increase self-esteem and self-

discipline (Oettingen & Gollwitzer, 2010). Furthermore, the impact of MCII interventions can continue to be effective for 16 weeks after the intervention (Oettingen & Gollwitzer, 2010). The combination of mental contrasting for goal setting and implementation intentions for goal striving has long lasting and meaningful impacts on behavior and increases self-regulatory behavior.

Research indicates that goal setting interventions, and specifically MCII interventions, have led to positive results in school settings. Duckworth, Grant, Loew, Oettingen, and Gollwitzer (2011) use MCII to increase self-discipline needed to obtain higher test scores. Thirty three sophomores from a diverse, selective urban school took part in an MCII intervention aimed at PSAT scores. Students who completed the intervention completed 60% more practice questions than those in the control group, indicating that MCII is successful at increase self-regulation in goal striving.

Goal setting can also impact college persistence. Morizano, Hirsh, Peterson, Pihl, and Shore (2010) gave 85 first year college students an online goal setting intervention. Over the course of one year, students who completed the intervention had increased GPAs, higher likelihood of maintaining a full course load, and report less negative affect. Most interestingly, this study combined goal setting in various areas of life. Traditional goal-setting interventions are specific to one domain, such as test scores. This intervention spanned multiple areas of college life and the results showed promising results. Oyserman, Terry, and Bybee, (2002) found that similar possible selves interventions had an impact on school belonging. After the intervention, students' self-concept changed to focus more on school and academics.

This paper proposes that combining prospective selves, identity based motivation and concrete goal setting and implementation intervention strategies will lead to enhanced college

motivation. Self-reported college motivation scores will increase. Furthermore, academic behaviors will reflect an increase in student motivation. Eventually, this intervention may lead to higher persistence rates in college. Motivation hinges on a student's predications about success. These predications are made based on a variety of sources – self-observation, vicarious learning, and self-efficacy beliefs. Furthermore, a student's identity and beliefs about who he is and how he relates to the world can create dissonance between college going goals and reality. The first step in motivating students is to introduce a cohesive prospective college going self and provide vicarious and symbolic college going learning experiences. Then, a student can commit to a college going goal. To capitalize on this momentum, implementation intentions can be used to create measurable and feasible actions that will help lead to the big goal. This will improve self-regulation, therefore creating an upward spiral of college motivation.

In the following section, I will propose a two day intervention for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. GPA and test preparation starts the first day of high school. If we wait to have students commit to a college until junior year, it may be too late. This exercise is designed to help students actively visualize their possible selves in connection with who they are today and the work they are doing in school (Oyserman, Teery, & Bybee, 2002).

### **Freshman Forward 2015**

This intervention is intended to combine the power of developing a college going identity with goal setting and implementation intentions. First generation students may not believe that college is possible for them (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). Identity-based motivation assumes that students interpret situations and difficulties in ways that are congruent with currently active identities and prefer identity-congruent to identity-incongruent actions (Oyserman, 2007). This intervention first seeks to show students that people like them have successfully graduated from college and reinforce a college going identity. It is important for students to connect their cultural

identities with role models who have graduated from college. Furthermore, this intervention is design to allow students to experience a college campus to concretize what college actually is. By combining the direct experience of a college campus and the idea that college is a very likely potential, I intend to increase college motivation. Similar interventions have been shown to increase school identification and self-regulation that leads to goal commitment and motivation (Oettingen, & Gollwitzer, 2010; Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002; Duckworth, Grant, Loew, Oettingen, & Gollwitzer, 2011). Students will leave the campus feeling that college is not only a possibility but a goal. I intend to capitalize on this increased motivation and future self by follow up with a goal setting and implementation intention intervention. Students will identify likely obstacles on the path the college (mental contrasting) and will create plans of action when they encounter these obstacles (implantation intentions). Combining mental contrasting and implementation intentions (MCII) has been demonstrated to increase self-esteem and self-discipline (Oettingen & Gollwitzer, 2010). The combination of mental contrasting for goal setting and implementation intentions for goal striving has long lasting and meaningful impacts on behavior and increases self-regulatory behavior.

My hypothesis is that the combination of building a future college going self with goal setting and implementation intentions will create a long lasting impact on both college motivation and academic behaviors.

### *Sample*

This intervention will be given to the entire 9<sup>th</sup> grade class of the Uplift Education charter school network. Uplift Education is a high performing urban charter school network in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Uplift Education has 9 high schools, 8 of which serve urban populations with a majority of potential first generation college students.

The projected  $N$  is 1,165, although the enrollment numbers may change once school starts. Approximately 83% of students will be eligible for free or reduced lunch prices. Latino students will make up the majority of the population (73%). The remaining students will be African American (22%), white (3%), and unreported (2%). Female students make up 52% of the population. These numbers have been estimated base on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade population, previous data trends, and projected enrollment numbers. Data on aspiring first generation college student status will be collected during school enrollment.

### *Procedure*

Students will be enrolled in the intervention as a part of the Road to College program, which supports students and families during their college journeys. The program starts in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and continues to support students through college. There are four parts to the program. Academic counselors help ensure that students are taking the most rigorous course load, are on track to graduate, and are involved in internships and extra-curricular activities. College counselors assist with college lists and applications. Alumni counselors work with financial aid and support alumni through college. I am the manager of special programs, the fourth branch of Road to College. I am in charge of creating and implementing programs that increase college motivation and develop social-emotional skills through curriculum and interventions. This intervention represents one activity in the extensive Road to College program.

Parents will sign permission slips and can opt out of the program, although I do not expect any students to opt out. In the past, we have seen 100% involvement in Road to College day trips. Students will not be reimbursed or graded on participation.

The intervention is designed to impact both college motivation and academic behaviors. These dependent variables will be impacted through the development of a college going identity

and goal setting implementation intentions. The first day will be spent on a college campus. Students will set foot on a campus for the first time, thereby giving context to their college going future self. They will engage in activities designed to build identity and reconcile that people like them can and do graduate from college. They will also briefly review what it will take to be accepted to college. The second day takes place back on the high school campus during a ninety minute class period. The students will capitalize on their college motivation and college knowledge to anticipate obstacle and create plans to overcome these.

The intervention will occur in two parts. On the first day, students go to Southern Methodist University (SMU). SMU is a medium sized private university in the heart of Dallas. The tree lined campus and classic brick buildings are an exemplar model of the beauty and grandeur of a college campus. SMU's admissions department has agreed to host the students free of charge. On the second day, students will return to their high school campuses and complete the intervention in their Professional Communications course, which is the first course in the RTC sequence of classes and teaches students about college.

Because of the number of students attending, the intervention will be repeated over the course of a week. Everyday two schools will visit SMU and complete the intervention on the second day.

#### *Sketch of the Activities*

Day 1: Students will arrive at the SMU campus at 9 AM and leave at 2 PM. During the day, students will engage in six different activities detailed below:

1) *Why College* (Goal: to introduce why college is a worthy goal). This section will review some of the reasons why people go to college. The reasons will resonate with each section of the I COPPE model. For example, the presenter will talk about how college can create more career

choices, which can impact occupational wellbeing. This section will appeal to students who value concrete reasons to go to college.

2) *Realities of College Life* (Goal: to reinforce that college is a worthy goal and allow students to hear advice from college students) Two to four Uplift Education alumni will speak to the students in a panel. The alumni will either be in the last 2 years of college or have graduated from college and the questions can be found in the appendix. Students will see role models who are like them who have succeed in going to college (Oyserman, 2013). This is intended to help build a college going identity. Furthermore, alumni will speak about the victories and struggles they experience in high school. This section will help students see that students who come from similar background had academic identities and engaged in rigorous academic behaviors. The intent is to help students reconcile their cultural, economic, and racial identity with an academically motivated identity (Oyserman, & Harrison, 1998; Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002). Lastly, alumni will share their reasons to attend college. By sharing their reasons, students will start to create personal reasons to go to college. Students will vicariously learn that people they relate to go to college. Furthermore, they will learned that it is normal to struggle in college and that these struggles can be overcome.

3) *Academic and College Going Identity Expressions*: (Goal: to allow students the opportunity to set a college going goal) During this session, students will be instructed to write a down a few reasons why they want to go to college. Additionally, they will be given the opportunity to write about what they would like their life to be like in the future and outline how getting a college degree will help them attain it. This will allow students to experiment with a prospective college going self (Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002). They will be allowed to imagine themselves on a



college campus and what it will be like. This will help them define the wish and visualize the outcome of college.

4) *Lunch and Campus Tour*: (Goal: to expose students to a college campus) Many of the students will never have been on a college campus before. Uplift Education messages that college is important, but without experiencing some of college life and seeing a campus, it will be hard for students to visualize what their life would be like at college. This is a vicarious learning experience as they will see students they resemble on campus.

5) *What Does it Take* (Goal: to connect the future to the present and educate students about the college process) This session will be facilitated by the Dean of College Prep on the campus. It will begin with a clip of the College Signing Day video. College Signing Day is an Uplift event where graduating seniors walk across the stage and announce their college choices. The event is held at SMU and is attended by all high school students. Once the clip plays, the facilitator will tell students that in four years, they will be walking across the stage on this very campus, but in order to do so, they must start preparing today. The facilitator will review the National Association for College Admission Counseling data about what admission counselors look for on a college application. Students will connect that GPA, test scores, recommendations, and leadership activities, the most influential data points, are developed overtime and need to start today. Then, SMU's admission teams will give a brief overview of SMU and the admission criteria. This session addresses that lack of college knowledge, which is essential for students to begin to plan their college path and set practical implementation intentions (Engle, 2007). In order to accurately set goals and implementation intentions toward a college going goal, students must know what is required.

6) *It's Up to Me*: (Goal: to provide realistic role models with relatable stories who come from similar background so that students can imagine a successful life after college) A successful community member will come to SMU to give a 20-30 minute speech. The speaker will be a person of color who has a college degree. He or she will speak about college help him/her reach his/her goals. The speaker will emphasize that getting to college and graduating from college was a struggle and setbacks are normal. The students will leave understanding that their actions today can impact their future. Again, this section emphasizes that students can relate to someone who has completed college, therefore reconciling their college going identity with other identities (Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002).

### *Day 2*

*(Goal: to have students integrate the experience at SMU to set a college-going goal, imagine college life, and break down the goal into manageable steps through MCII)*

Goal setting theory and MCII will be practiced in the classroom. Goal setting theory defines skills and qualities that lend students towards success, while MCII is an applied framework to make this theory tangible. The unit will use mental contrasting intention implication to help students explore their possible selves. Students will learn the difference between a fork and a hurdle. They will then brainstorm potential forks and hurdles that may impede their road to college. They will create when/then statements as a form of MCII. For a detail description of the intervention, see the appendix.

### *Measures*

- College Motivation Survey: Once the in class intervention is complete students will answer the created survey in the appendix. They will complete this survey twice, once the day after the intervention and again right before spring break (approximately

- 6 months later). There are 8 questions that students will be asked to rate how descriptive each statement was of self (1 = “strongly disagree,” 5 = “strongly agree”), with a high score indicating a high level of college motivation.
- **School Belonging:** Uplift Education has a partnership with Panorama to survey students twice a year. Last year, several schools opted into a pilot version of the study and the surveys will be redistributed to all scholars in December 2015. One of the measurements examined is school belonging. A subset of 375 students completed a school belonging survey at the end of their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year. This survey will be redistributed in both December 2015 and May 2016.
  - **Self-Report on School Behaviors:** At the end of the semester, in December, teachers will hand out the in class activity and ask students to reflect on how well they were able to self-regulate to help achieve their goals. Students will reflect on if they used the if/then statements and how effective was the planning. This will be an open ended reflection with targeted questions. See the appendix for questions
  - **Behavior:** School discipline is recorded in an electronic database called HERO. Teachers track phone calls home, demerits (for behavior such as talking at inappropriate times, being out of uniform, and missing homework), and more serious violations such as suspensions (bullying), and expulsions. The data will be collected throughout the ninth grade year.
  - **Projected Growth:** Uplift Education predicts student growth on assessments given four times a year.

### *Analysis*

- College Commitment: This survey will provide descriptive data about the day. It will be used to help us see what students liked and did not like.
- School Belonging: For students who completed the quiz at the end of their eighth grade year, May 2015, pre- (May) and post- (December) intervention scores will be compared. The data will also be compared with school belonging scores of the current eighth grade class when the December survey is given.
- Behavior: Incidents of disciplined behavior will be compared within subjects, comparing last year's eighth grade data with ninth grade data. Additionally, the overall number and severity of incidents will be compared between this class and the two previous classes. Behavior may be broken down by quarter to see if the intervention had more immediate effects.
- Projected Growth: Uplift Education predicts student growth on assessments given four times a year. Growth will be looked at within each subject. Projections will be compared to actuals. Growth in any subject area may be attributed to a variety of factors, including a good teacher or an interest in a specific subject. However, more than predicted growth in all subject areas may indicate an effect on academic behaviors overall. I will measure how many students reach and exceeded their growth goals. This data will be compared to their last year growth as well as the growth of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade class.

### *Limitations*

This intervention is one in a series of interventions designed to help students on the road to college. Like many interventions that are a part of a school program, there is an issue of internal validity. For example, later in the year, these same scholars will do a speech about using strengths to overcome an obstacle in their path. They will then write about how these same

strengths can help them overcome obstacles on their future path to college. Additionally, they will do an in depth career analysis and investigate different potential careers in attempt to develop academic and college going identities. The true effects of this intervention can never be isolated from these other situations, therefore I cannot prove causality.

Second, this intervention is being carried out within a very specific context. Only students from Uplift Education will be participants, therefore there are issues of external validity. While students come from all over Dallas and Fort Worth, they are all inundated with the same college going culture, follow with same curriculum, and have elected to attend a charter school. The results of this intervention may not scale to the population at large.

Lastly, there is no control group for the study. The intervention is funded through grants and donation. Part of the agreement is that all Uplift ninth grade students must take part in the intervention. That being said, I will compare the results of the scales to both the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade Uplift classes to see if there are significant differences. Also, I will collect qualitative data from the students to see if there is a change in their thinking.

One may argue that this study will never be empirically sound because one cannot decipher what worked and what did not. It illustrates the inherent conflict between academia and applied knowledge. While empirically testing the theory is important, applied workers must try to appeal to as many students as possible. This intervention will be a success if even a few students show an increase in college going behaviors. One student may benefit most from hearing the panel, another might start daydreaming about being on a college campus during lunch, and yet another may be motivated by hearing the speaker at the end of the day. Creating this intervention may help some students who are part of the Uplift Education network, and that is success.

## Discussion

The intervention combines possible selves with implementation intentions. Research indicated that the first step in the road to college is having an academic identity (Oyserman, 2013; Savitz-Romer and Bouffard, 2012). Without college aspirations, college going success identities, especially in light of potential obstacles enhances college goings intentions. The intervention attempts to create multiple instances where students can learn that college is not in conflict with their identity through vicarious experiences. Prospective self-work alone is not enough (Oyserman, 2013). The research on goal setting and implementation interventions is promising. Providing students with the tools and time to set a goal and plan for obstacles can increase self-regulation and commitment (Duckworth, Grant, Loew, Oettingen, & Gollwitzer, 2011).

This intervention combines a multitude of theories – social cognitive theory, identity based motivation, and goal setting. There are a variety of internal validity and external validity issues. Furthermore, the elements of the intervention are not tested in isolation.

If, though, the analysis yields greater results, this intervention can be shared with other educational systems. College trips for young students are increasingly popular. Frequently these trips consist of a tour, lunch, and an untargeted student panel. The intervention could suggest a few easy improvements to college trips. For example, questions could be more targeted or students could engage in the goal setting classroom activity when they return to campus.

America is known as the land of opportunity. Immigrants come here so that their children can succeed and have a better life. The education data reviewed in this paper suggests that this is far from the reality. The evidence shows that education is not equal in America. This must be addressed on multiple fronts. One intervention alone cannot change education

inequality, but this intervention may shift the way educators talk about their roles. Instead of purveyors of knowledge, we can be dream makers. If we encourage students to dream dreams that may seem impossible or conflict with their negative perceptions of self and provide them with tools to accomplish these dreams, we can change the landscape of higher education in America. Each person, and especially each child, should be given a fair and equitable chance of success. Small changes may have enormous results. In the long run, this will not only lead to students' increased well-being, but an increase in wellbeing for us all, for a well society cannot be an unequal society. Without addressing education opportunity gaps, we will never reach the goal of 51% of the world flourishing by 2051.

## Appendix A

## Itinerary for the SMU Trip

<b>Teaching Plan</b>	
<i>Why College</i> (Goal: to introduce why college is a worthy goal)	<p>Why College:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpersonal – Make friends that can last a lifetime</li> <li>Community – Get an education to change the world</li> <li>Occupational – Find a job that you love</li> <li>Physical – During college, you can participate in fun activities and try new things. Example: Rock climbing wall, intermural sports, eating new food in the cafeteria</li> <li>Psychological – Show statistics about anxiety and depression among college and non-college graduates</li> <li>Economic – Make enough money so that it is not a concern (show economic stats)</li> </ul>
<i>Realities of College Life</i> (Goal: to reinforce that college is a worthy goal and allow students to hear advice from college students)	<p>Two to four alumni will participate in the alumni panel. Alumni will have graduated from the alumni school. Students will be prepped beforehand.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why did you decide that you wanted to go to college?</li> <li>2. What kept you motivated to stay on track while you were in high school?</li> <li>3. Has there ever been a time when you thought about leaving college? Why did you decide to stay?</li> <li>4. What are some of the obstacles you have encountered in your college career?</li> <li>5. What does the day in the life of a college student look like?</li> <li>6. What's your favorite thing about being a college student?</li> <li>7. What was your most interesting class? Why?</li> <li>8. What was your most difficult class? Why?</li> <li>9. What is the social life in college like?</li> <li>10. How does college connect to the vision you have for your life? Career? Social? Financial?</li> <li>11. What do you wish you knew as a high school freshman?</li> </ol>



<p><i>Academic and College Going Identity Expressions:</i> (Goal: to allow students to opportunity to set a college going goal)</p>	<p>Students will be given Road to College branded notebook. This notebook is a gift for you to keep over the next four years. It is to serve as a reflection space. As you know, your teachers and everyone at Uplift Education believes that you are college going material. Today, you heard about some reasons why students who graduated from Uplift schools went to college. Open your notebook. On the first page, write down your own reason to go to college. This may change over the years, but it's important for you to write down specific reasons. Be as clear as possible. You will have 5 minutes.</p> <p>Now that you have written these down, I want you to share your reasons with the person next to you. You have 3 minutes. You may make edits and add more reasons to your list if you would like. Who would like to share with the groups?</p> <p>Thanks for setting this goal. We will continue to reflect on these through the year. I want you all to close your eyes for a second and imagine yourself in high school. Imagine what you need to do to get into college. Can you see yourself studying? Imagine working late and writing papers. Imagine taking your ACT. Before the ACT you are studying with all your friends. You are quizzing each other. You get your results back and you did better than expected. Your hard work paid off. Now imagine you are applying to college. Imagine talking to the college counselor you just met. Imagine sending off your college applications. A large envelop arrives in the mail box. Imagine opening it and you are accepted to your dream school. Imagine the look on your parents face. Imagine walking across the stage at college signing day and stating where you will be going to college. The whole auditorium erupts in applause.</p> <p>Now open your eyes. I want you to turn to the next page and write down what this would mean for you. What will your life look like in college? What would it mean for your family? What kind of job will you be able to get? What will you do in college? Express yourself and don't worry about grammar. Just write about the positive outcomes of getting into the college of your dreams. (20 minutes)</p> <p>For the last 10 minutes, I want you to turn to the third page. On this page, you are going to write yourself a letter. School can be hard. There may be times you want to give up. You might feel unmotivated or disheartened. Now, while you have these positive feelings, I want you to write yourself a letter of encouragement to keep in the front of this book through high school.</p>
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<p><i>Lunch and Campus Tour:</i> (Goal: to expose students to a college campus)</p>	<p>Lunch – Students and chaperones will eat together. Teachers are encourage to have conversations about their college experiences.</p> <p>Tour:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>New Residential Commons*</b>- SMU doesn't just have dorms for its students to live in, it has residential commons. Being part of a Commons provides connection to a community of students and faculty and each commons has different traditions and activities that the students participate in. These are 5 brand new residential commons that were just opened this summer. College students live in dorms in universities all over the nation. It's like living in an apartment without a kitchen. Most rooms have beds, dressers, and desks. The best part, and sometimes the worst part, is that you live with a roommate. Imagine having a sleep over with your best friend every night. It can be a lot of fun, but sometimes it's hard to stay focused. That's why lots of students study in the library, which we will pass soon. Tell roommate or dorm story.</li> <li>2. <b>Dedman Rec Center</b> - Includes climbing walls, basketball, racquetball and indoor soccer courts, recreational pool, dance/aerobic studios, weight room, fitness areas, sand volleyball courts, classrooms and a café. Living on a college campus can often mean that you don't leave campus. In some schools, like SMU, everything you need is provided. You can work out, see movies, and even go swimming on campus. Also, there are tons of clubs to join. What are some of your interests? (Get answers and explain how it would be a college club.) When I went to college, there were clubs for everything. Tell a college engagement story.</li> <li>3. <b>Dallas Hall</b> - This was the first building on SMU's campus. It was named after the city that rallied behind the opening of this great university. Today classes in the humanities and sciences are taught here. Classes in college can be very different than classes in high school. Some classes are big lecture halls. There can be over 200 kids in a class. Other classes are very small. It's up to you to make sure that you are learning the material in college. Let's brainstorm. What are some of the ways you know you have learned material?</li> </ol>
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	<p>4. <b>Bridwell Library</b> - Bridwell Library is named for Joseph S. Bridwell (1885-1966), a rancher and businessman from Wichita Falls, Texas, who devoted much of his time and resources to building this Library. In the late 1940s, Mr. Bridwell and his daughter Margaret Bridwell Bowdle donated the funds for the first library building. Libraries in college are much bigger than the ones you are used to. This one has 4 floors. In college, students use the library for references, just like you. They also have access to a variety of on line courses. More often, though, students flock to the library to study. There are areas to study in groups and quite areas to study alone.</p>
<p><i>It's Up to Me:</i> (Goal: to provide realistic role models with relatable stories who come from similar background so that students can imagine a successful life after college)</p>	<p>Motivational speakers are in the process of being recruited. They will speak about their experiences and motivate the students to start focusing on college now.</p>

Appendix B

**Lesson to Complete the Day after SMU Trip**

**Forks and Hurdles**

**Duration: 90 minutes**

<b><u>IB Framework</u></b>	
<p><b>Statement of Inquiry and Lesson Connection:</b></p> <p>Statement of inquiry: The development of our identity is dependent on the systems we use to function and adapt in society.</p> <p>How it connects to the lesson: Goal setting theory and implementation intentions are methods to help individuals develop parts of themselves that empower them to hit their goals. Scholars will learn how to use goal</p>	<p><b>Connection to Learner Profile Attribute(s):</b></p> <p>Learner Profile Attribute: Reflective</p> <p>How it connects to the lesson: Students will reflect on their SMU trip and what they have learned during the trip. They will continue to internalize that they are on a path to college and that much in this path is in their control. Students will then develop a plan to overcome forks and hurdles.</p>

<p>setting theory and implementation intentions to help develop a college going identity.</p>	
<p><b><u>Lesson Vision</u></b></p>	
<p><b>Objective(s):</b>                  SWBAT set a long term goal and develop implementation intentions to overcome hurdles and forks.</p> <p>In order to commit to the goal of attending college, we must imagine ourselves placed within a college setting. First generation students are less likely to have visited a college campus, discussed college with family, heard stories of other’s college experiences, and known someone who has a college degree. Therefore, while cognitively capable of imagining college, they may not connecting with this version of their future possible self. A possible self is an image of one’s future. Students build possible selves by “synthesizing what they know about their traits and abilities and what they know of the skills needed to becomes future selves” (Oyserman, Terry, &amp; Bybee, 2002).</p> <p>While different from goals because they are less concrete, possible selves often inspire goals and are motivating (Moretti and Higgins, 1990; Oyserman and Markus, 1990). Students who have future possible selves that are focused on academic achievement are at reduced risk of involvement in delinquent activities (Oyserman and Markus, 1990), attain better grades (Oyserman and Harrison, 1998), and feel more connected to school (Oyserman and Harrison, 1998). Once students can connect with a possible future self in college, students can set college going goals. During the SMU trip, students will engage in this activity. This is the first step in the goal setting intervention.</p> <p>The second part of the goal setting intervention will be done in the classroom.</p>	<p><b>Key Points:</b>                  Going to college is a choice I need to make and I must define my own reason.                  Envisioning my future self will help me realize why college is important to me.                  I must make the right choices to set myself up for success.                  I must be able to overcome obstacles on my road to college.</p> <p><b>Vocabulary:</b>  <u>Content vocabulary</u>                  Self-Efficacy - refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997).</p> <p>Fork – a choice that can either help a scholar reach a goal or make it more difficult to succeed. Scholars have the power to make the right decision. Brainstorm a fork that a college student might face. (Oyserman, Terry &amp; Bybee, 2002)</p> <p>Hurdle - An obstacle that might make it more difficult to reach a goal. The hurdle is not controlled by the scholar, but the reaction to the hurdle is. Brainstorm a hurdle example. (Oyserman, Terry &amp; Bybee, 2002)</p> <p>Self-regulation - ability to act in your long-term best interest, consistent with your deepest values. can be used to help a person achieve a long-term goal by helping a person to avoid or pursue specific impulses, thoughts, feelings (Baumeister, Failliot, DeWall, &amp; Oaten, 2006)</p> <p>Grit – passion and persistence towards a goal (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, &amp; Kelly, 2007)</p>

During the goal setting process, there are three modes of thought: mental contrasting, indulging, and dwelling (Servincer, Busatta & Oettingen, 2014). Goal setting that focuses only on the positive, or indulging, limits thinking to time when the goal is achieved. Dwelling focuses on the difference in reality between the ideal state and the current state. Both dwelling and indulging lead to inaccurate assessments of expectancy, creating low commitment and inaccurate estimates of self-efficacy (Servincer, Busatta & Oettingen, 2014). Conversely, mental contrasting, or engagement in limited indulging and limited dwelling creates higher commitment, accurate self-efficacy, and realistic goals, which can impact attainment (Servincer, Busatta & Oettingen, 2014). When developing goal setting interventions, one should spend equal time fantasizing about the potential result and exploring possible obstacles. Thinking about what could go right and what could go wrong can provide one with the energy needed to achieve goals (Servincer, Busatta & Oettingen, 2014).

In today's lesson, students and teachers will identify forks (areas where students have choice) and hurdles (obstacles places by others) in the timeline to college graduation. A fork may be scores, GPA, acceptances, study skills, and participation in extracurricular. A hurdle may be racial barriers, lack of financial resources, documented status, and lack of parental support. Students and teachers will then talk about strategies to make the right choices and overcome hurdles.

Then students will write a series of if/then statements to help them plan for what do when they encounter a hurdle or a fork.

**TEKS:**

<p>(3) The student understands and examines problem-solving methods. The student is expected to employ critical-thinking and interpersonal skills independently and in teams to solve problems.</p> <p>(7) The student develops leadership characteristics. The student is expected to participate in student leadership and professional development activities.</p> <p>(9) The student applies technical skills for efficiency. The student is expected to employ planning and time-management skills to relate to professional communications.</p>	
<p><b>ELPS:</b>                  Listening &amp; Speaking                  Following Directions                  Large-group and small-group instructional interactions                  Reading                  Cooperative group work                  Writing                  Reflective writing such as journaling</p>	
<p><b>Skills (CRS or Process Skill):</b>                  Lesson is designed to reinforce the Go and Act elements of Conley’s College Ready Model. Go addresses college knowledge, including exposure, application support, and financial aid. The SMU trip provides students with the opportunity to Act includes create goals and implementation intentions around success during high school.</p>	
<p><b>Assessment (ET):</b>                  Scholars will commit to a college goal and plan implementation intention for forks and hurdles.</p>	
<p><b>Accommodations/Modifications for Special Populations:</b>                  Scholars’ lessons will be adjusted as stated by their IEP or if they are ELL.                  Vocabulary will be presented in a variety of ways for ELL learner.                  Scholars will be given extra time to complete projects and more individualized attention to assist with creating products.                  Scholars will be able to use various means to expression that align to their learning styles.</p>	
<p><b>Materials Needed:</b>                  Students must bring SMU notebook to class                  PowerPoint                  Notebook Paper                  Design Journals                  Post it Notes</p>	

<b><u>Teaching Plan</u></b>	
<p><b><u>Do Now</u></b>  <b>Time:</b>  <b>5 minutes</b></p>	<p>Writing Exercise</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Take out your folder and notebook from the SMU trip</li> <li>2. Write down your reflection from the SMU trip.                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Write down 3 things that you learned</li> <li>b. Write down 2 things that you liked about SMU.</li> <li>c. Write down one question you still have about SMU and the college</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>Ask students to share their questions and discuss the answers.</p>

<p><b><u>Hook</u></b> <b>Time: 15</b></p>	<p>Discussion:</p> <p>During the SMU trip, we heard from several people about why they wanted to go to college. What reasons do you remember hearing? (Have students share out and discuss.) Which reason resonated most with you? Why? Is there a different reason you want to go to college? What did you write down on the goal sheet?</p> <p>Teacher should then share one reason why he/she wanted to go to college.</p> <p>During the SMU trip, we wrote a short example about what our lives would be like if we went to college. For the next 8 minutes, I would like you to read this again and edit or add to the story if you would like.</p>
<p><b><u>Intro to New Material</u></b> <b><u>(I Do)</u></b> <b>Time: 10 minutes</b></p>	<p>Present PowerPoint on forks and hurdles. Have scholars start to brainstorm different forks and hurdles that could get in the way of a college students graduating once the student has already started college.</p> <p>Self-Efficacy - refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997).</p> <p>Reinforce that all scholars in this class are able to go to and succeed in college. To do so, we need will need to anticipate things that might prevent us from succeeding.</p> <p>Fork – a choice that can either help a scholar reach a goal or make it more difficult to succeed. Scholars have the power to make the right decision. Brainstorm a fork that a college student might face. Example: going home to hang out with high school friends instead of staying on campus to study for a test and make new friends.</p> <p>Hurdle - An obstacle that might make it more difficult to reach a goal. The hurdle is not controlled by the scholar, but the reaction to the hurdle is. Brainstorm a hurdle example. Example: you are the only Latino student on campus and someone said something offensive. You are tired of feeling alone.</p> <p>When we encounter these, sometimes we may want to give up. Giving up would not help us reach out goals. Review grit definition. Sometimes we may be tempted by another choice that</p>

	<p>won't help us reach our big goals, but could be more fun and tempting in the meantime. Then we need to call on self-regulation.</p> <p>Self-regulation - ability to act in your long-term best interest, consistent with your deepest values. can be used to help a person achieve a long-term goal by helping a person to avoid or pursue specific impulses, thoughts, feelings (Baumeister, Failliot, DeWall, &amp; Oaten, 2006)</p> <p>High scores on self-regulation scales correlate with success in life. While the degree of self-regulation differs between people, the ability to exhibit self-regulation can also vary within a person. Self-regulation is best described as a muscle because it can experience fatigue and suffer from ego depletion, and it can be strengthened over time through repetitive use. One way to build up self-regulation and grit is to plan out how you will react in response to a certain situation.</p> <p>Go through examples for hurdles and forks brainstormed about.</p> <p>Example Fork: If I am tempted to hang out with high school friends at home instead of staying on campus to study for a test and make new friends, then I will immediately go to the library to study. I will set up a Skype date with my friends from home for later that evening. I will open the campus newspaper and find one activity that weekend that I will enjoy and I will go to it. I will ask my roommate to go with me so I have a friend to make sure I go.</p> <p>Example Hurdle: If I am the only Latino student on campus and someone said something offensive and it makes me feel alone, then I will go to the next student of color meeting. I will take a class in Latino history next semester. I will tell the person who said something offensive how I feel and why the comment offends me. I will explain to my friends on campus how I am feeling. I will email my Uplift classmates who are in the same situation and see how they are coping.</p> <p><b>Checks for Understanding and Exemplar Student Responses</b>  What is a fork? A fork is a choice. If we make the right decision, we can increase our likelihood at succeeding in high school and college. The wrong choice may make our road more difficult. An example of a fork would be the decision to go to a sleep over party the day before the ACT test. (Other examples: studying, planning for assignments, going to tutoring, doing community service,</p>
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	<p>doing extra credit, applying to college trips, doing a summer activity, drinking, doing drugs, having unprotected sex, etc.)</p> <p>What is a hurdle? A hurdle is something that comes up in our road to college that we cannot control. We may not have the power, like in the fork, but our actions can still help control the outcome. For example, a hurdle may be that our parents cannot contribute a lot of money towards college. We can make sure we get good grades, research and apply to scholarships, and apply to colleges with good financial aid. (Other examples: discrimination, documentation status, learning disabilities, difficulty passing a particular subject, test anxiety, emotional distress, family issues, having to move, switching high schools, having home responsibilities, having to work, etc.)</p> <p><b>Potential Misconceptions:</b> Students may not understand the difference between a situation that is in their control and outside of their control. Students may think that a hurdle is not something that can be overcome.</p>
<p><b><u>Guided Practice (We Do)</u></b> <b>Time: 30</b></p>	<p>Group students into fours. Instruct students to brainstorm as many forks and hurdles they can imagine that may occur during high school. Teacher should monitor the room to make sure students are listing practical forks and hurdles. Have students write the hurdles and the forks on sticky notes. Groups should create a minimum of five for each category. For each, students should provide as much detail as possible. The forks should provide details about the choice, but not explicitly state what the correct choice is. Teachers should label one part of the classroom “hurdles” and one part of the classroom “forks.” Have students organize their sticky notes according to forks and hurdles and place the sticky note under the right category. Students should do a gallery walk of the examples and pick 3 forks and 3 hurdles that they anticipate may be arise on their path to college. Have students write this on a sheet of paper.</p> <p>Pick one example from the forks and hurdles that seems challenging. Explain that you will be doing an exercise called implementation intentions. These types of exercises are supposed to help you harness your inner grit. Who remembers what grit is? Grit is passion and persistence towards a goal.</p> <p>Write on the board:</p> <p>When I (fork or hurdle), then I will...</p>

	<p>As a class, brainstorm 3-5 statements to fill in the then section of the statement.</p>
	<p><b>Checks for Understanding and Exemplar Student Responses:</b> How many examples do you need to create? We should create a <u>minimum of 5</u> for each category, but as many as possible.</p>
	<p><b>Potential Misconceptions</b> Students may continue to struggle with the difference between forks and hurdles. Students may not provide enough detail for the fork.</p>
<p><b><u>Independent Practice</u></b> <b><u>(You Do)</u></b> <b>Time: 15</b></p>	<p>Have students independently complete when/then statements for the forks and hurdles they selected.</p> <p>For the then part of the statement, be as intentional as possible. Write in as much detail as you can. Be specific. In 9 minutes, we are going to share with the group.</p>
	<p><b>Checks for Understanding and Exemplar Student Responses:</b> What do you put after the when? – You write down the fork or the hurdle in as much detail as possible. What do you put after the then? – You write what you will do that make the right choice or take the write action.</p>
	<p><b>Potential Misconceptions</b> Scholars may need help figuring out what the appropriate when actions are. If so, call the group back together and do one example as a class.</p>
<p><b><u>Closure and Exit Ticket</u></b> <b>Time: 15</b></p>	<p><u>Closure:</u> Have scholars share some of their responses with the entire class. (12 minutes) During the share out, have students take notes and make updates were appropriate.</p> <p><u>Exit Ticket:</u> “List three resources that you have to help you on the road to college. These can be internal, such as my determination or external such as my parents. You cannot use those two examples. (3 minutes)</p>
<p><b><u>Homework/Extension</u></b></p>	<p>Finish implementation intentions if not completed in class. Share the paper with their parents. Have parents sign paper.</p>

## Appendix C

## Student College Motivation Survey

I am committed to going to college.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I know what I have to do as a 9<sup>th</sup> grader to go to college in the future.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I feel that I am capable to doing what it takes in high school to go to college.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I am committed to making the right choices that will lead to college.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

I can overcome any hurdle that I come across on my road to college.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

College will help me reach my goals.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

The SMU trip helped motivate me to go to college.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

## Appendix D

### Self-Report on School Behaviors Reflection Questions

1. Has your approach to school change from last year? If so, how? Why?
2. Have you attitudes or feelings about school changes? If so, how? What were they before versus now?
3. How do you feel you performed this semester?
4. How much effort did you put into your school work? Support your answer with data and examples?
5. How much did your behavior influence your outcomes this semester? Did they effect it in a good or bad way? What could you have done differently?
6. Looking back on the forks and hurdles exercise, which ones were helpful? Which ones do you need to update or change?

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