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The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment: A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy

Tara N. Strickland

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Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting

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by

Tara N. Strickland

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A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in

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Sherrie Wisdom   10/15/2021

Dr. Sherrie Wisdom, Dissertation Chair   Date

Kevin Winslow   10/15/2021

Dr. Kevin Winslow, Committee Member   Date

Rebecca D Foushee   10/15/2021

Dr. Rebecca Foushee, Committee Member   Date

Dr. Anissa Harris   10/7/2021

Dr. Anissa Harris, Committee Member   Date
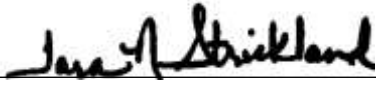
Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

Full Legal Name: Tara N. Strickland

Signature: _____*Tara N. Strickland*_____   Date: 10/15/2021

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I interpret acknowledgement as an expression of gratitude toward others AND an acceptance of my personal truths.

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Abstract

Andragogy is not dead; it may be simply lying dormant until its essential component, self-directed learning, revives it again. The fact is that self-directed learning can be formal or informal. This mixed methods study explored the informal side of self-directed learning, concentrating on self-help (a popularized form of personal development goal-setting). Despite a thriving self-help market, several personal development goal-setting programs focus more on goal achievement, little on goal planning, and even less on the individual. A comparative analysis of autonomous, guided, and self-directed personal goal-setting programs determined if self-directedness maximizes self-efficacy. Additionally, the researcher's original *Self-Directed Goal Theory* and an extensive review of previous literature further investigated what role (if any) adult education, demographics, goal characteristics, self-regulation, personal development areas, goal timing, self-monitoring, locus of control, motivation, cognition, and virtue cultivation plays in self-efficacy enhancement and overall goal success.

Key words: andragogy, self-directed learning, self-help, goal-setting, personal development, goal characteristics, self-efficacy

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Chapter One: Introduction

Prologue

Embracing the big picture without peeking behind the curtains does a disservice to subject matter and self. When defining holistic assessment, Barlex et al. (2000) analogized a person deciding whether a house was for sale. He said, "A person wouldn't look at single bricks in the house or even a wall of bricks. She would look at the house as a whole and could see instantly whether it is in the process of being built, almost complete, complete but unoccupied, or complete and occupied. In short, it was noted that there was little point in focusing on bricks when you are interested in houses" (p. 36). On the contrary, when the structure is complete, bricks matter. Over time, brickwork deteriorates, potentially wreaking havoc on a house (How Brick Crumbles, n.d., para. 5). This citation accurately portrayed the Andragogy perspective—routinely open-and-shut, rarely equivocal.

Andragogy has been paraphrased as adult education, contrasting its child education counterpart, Pedagogy. But despite its phoenixlike concepts, it has remained under fire. For example, Andragogy conceives "learners as self-directed and autonomous" (Andragogy II, n.d., para. 9)—a skill attainable at any age. Self-directed learning can be pursued formally or informally. So, learners may take initiative inside the classroom to improve academic performance or in the real world for personal

development; this dissertation study explores the latter (Self-Directed Learning, n.d., para. 4).

Backdrop

Personal development is no stranger to adult education. As far back as the 1800s, the andragogical term, self-direction, was interchanged with other terms, "such as self-help, self-improvement and self-education" (Loeng, 2020, p. 1). However, implying a kinship between the two might be like comparing apples to oranges. Encyclopedia Britannica broadly described adult education as "any form of learning undertaken by or provided for mature men and women" (2013, para. 1). Definitions.net classified personal development as any "activity that improves awareness and identity, develops talents and potential, builds human capital and facilitates employability, enhances quality of life and contributes to the realization of dreams and aspirations" (Personal Development Theories, n.d., para. 1). Personal development encompasses self-development and self-help (Personal Development Theories, n.d., para. 1).

Fundamentally, adult education and personal development may seem unyoked; however, there may be hidden similarities. First and foremost, education predominates personal development. Education enhances confidence, social standing, self-perception, and communication. It also sets the stage for a thriving career, repertoire enhancement, and overall financial success (Stevens, 2016, para. 4). Both adult education and personal development are lifelong processes. Both utilize life experience, and both involve goal setting.

In adult education, summative evaluations are used to "demonstrate achievement and judge the quality of a program in its entirety" (Bin Mubayrik, 2020, p. 2). Since

adult education and personal development run parallel, evaluations in the personal development goal-setting must be equally crucial. Previous studies did not provide solid evaluation criterion for personal development goal-setting—other than goal attainment. But, given the below scenario, proactive measures are vital during goal actualization versus a post hoc reaction.

Twelve self-help books sat on the bookshelves, collecting dust. Each book served a unique purpose—developing emotional intelligence, dealing with conflict, healing the soul, practicing Feng Shui, understanding the opposite sex, becoming an influencer, identifying a love language, improving health, learning how to get published, how to meditate, how to pray, and how to communicate. Yet, each book had one thing in common; highlighted tasks were only partially executed. What was the underlying motivation behind each task? Did they support an overarching goal—or were they simply good intentions?

Conceptual Framework

Personal development goal-setting (a type of self-directed learning) has been popularly branded as "self-help." Economically, the self-help market routinely tips the profit scales. The market spans across a wide spectrum, "encompassing products and services like e-books, online courses, coaching programs, webinars, academies, universities, masterminds, masterclasses, conferences, mobile apps, etc." (Trevor, 2021, para. 1). This year, the global market is slated to produce a $40.23 billion profit, growing at a rate of 5.1% by 2027 (Trevor, 2021, para. 2). The current U.S. market accounts for $12.31 billion of those profits—approximately 69% (Trevor, 2021, para. 4). The

statistics speak to the potent influence of personal development goal-setting (or self-help).

Throughout the researcher's ongoing personal improvement journey, she never encountered personal development goal-setting programs that focused heavily on planning—only results. To her, the self-help market's success demonstrated the bandwagon effect. People banked more on "if" they achieved the goal rather than "how" they achieved it. It mimics taking a road trip to an unfamiliar city and state, expecting to reach the destination with no compass, map, or navigation—simply the desire to get there.

Theoretical Framework

Cognitive, moral, personality, social, and humanistic theories point to the cause of personal development. The causes represent the individual mindset, prompting the need for personal development, for example:

- Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory mimicked Pedagogy and Andragogy, establishing that "children think differently than adults" (Personality Development Theories, n.d., para. 3).

- Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory covered personality development as it related to moral thought (Personality Development Theories, n.d., para. 7).

- Personality Psychology acknowledged each person's unique thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Personality Development Theories, n.d., para. 8).

- Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory considered that social relationships sway personality development (Personality Development Theories, n.d., para. 6)

- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Humanist Theory reflected on a person's immediate needs (Personality Development Theories, n.d., para. 17).

Neural and behavioral theories indicate the effect of personal development. The effects characterize an individual's performance during the personal development process; for example:

- Horney's Theory of Neurotic Needs called out the overuse of anxiety coping techniques (Personality Development Theories, n.d., para. 14).

- Behavioral learning theories such as Classical and Operant Conditioning recognized that certain stimuli, reinforcement, and punishment evoke a particular response (Personality Development Theories, n.d., paras. 15-16).

Personal development goal-setting is a derivative of self-directed learning, an andragogical component. However, unlike education, instructional planning in personal development leaves much to be desired. Previous studies did not provide direct evidence supporting the personal development planning process—only static self-help groups and vague suggestions. Self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART Recovery) offer uniform steps and personal growth facilitation (Burzinski & Zgierska, 2014, para. 1). Several websites provided personal development planning suggestions, such as setting lifetime and smaller goals, staying on course, making sure goals were SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound) (Personal Goal Setting, n.d., paras. 10-21), planning each day, concentrating on high-value activities (Tracy, n.d., paras. 38-40), setting deadlines, recognizing threats and opportunities, using a support network, measuring progress (Spruce, 2020, para. 6), establishing a purpose, identifying needs/learning

opportunities, recording outcomes, and evaluating/reviewing (Personal Development

Planning, 2020, para. 5). Some websites even provided templates that mirrored business

strategic plans. Unfortunately, no known resources offered guidance on how to measure,

how to recognize obstacles, how to create accountability, or how to cater to the

individual.

Rationale

Figuratively speaking, the concept of Andragogy has morphed from a plain

caterpillar to an embellished butterfly. By plain definition, Andragogy is the art and

science of helping adults learn. Learning is self-directed and teachers merely guide the

process. Early on, it became apparent that Andragogy could cover a broad spectrum of

settings—not just the classroom. It became less about teaching adults and more about

scientific discipline (Henschke, 2011, p. 34). The field of Andragogy (and self-directed

learning) continues to mature. The researcher sought to further embellish the already

broad spectrum.

Through self-direction, "learners find expression in their ability to perceive the

goals of a learning experience to be their personal goals and therefore have a feeling of

commitment toward it: they participate actively in the learning process: they harness their

own experience when learning, and they have a sense of progress toward their goals"

(van der Walt, 2019, p. 5). If self-directed learners determine their own goals, then they

should also have full autonomy when choosing their lessons. Previous research

suggested that, in self-directed learning, learners do not have complete freedom "to

identify their own goals of what they want to learn because the goals are set by the

instructor" (Robinson & Persky, 2020, p. 293). But what if the lesson was self-taught and the learning objective was personal development goal achievement?

Self-directed learning concentrates more on instructional method than learning environment. In the book, *Adult Learning Methods: A Guide for Effective Instruction*, Galbraith (2004) acknowledged that instructional methods, such as learning contracts can be used by individual adult learners in their own self-directed or informal learning. The contract simply identifies what the lesson is, how it will be accomplished, when it will occur, and how results will be evaluated (p. 289-290).

The term, learning contract, is also interchanged with personal development or action plan (Galbraith, 2004, p. 290). If personal development is recognized as a form of learning contract, then there must be a particular approach to evaluating results. In Galbraith's (2004) book, he further explained that when learning a skill is the objective, evidence of accomplishment might include performance exercises or some form of rating evidence (p. 312). However, learning a new skill is definitive of a learning goal; personal development goals consist of more than one goal type. A *Human Performance* journal study measured performance goals against learning goals. The results found that "performance goals activate more lower-level cognitive functions (e.g., attention, memory and comprehension) in comparison to learning goals (e.g., analysis and evaluation, planning, and self-monitoring)" (Seijts & Latham, 2011, p. 191).

A myriad of research exists on different goal types. For example, an article in the *Current Directions in Psychological Science* journal explored different goal types (e.g., learning goals, autonomy goals, and macro-level goals), goal choices, and goal traits (Locke & Latham, 2006, pp. 266-268). Even more research exists on how goal setting

improves well-being. Based on the results of a five-week intervention, "goal-setting and planning (G.A.P.) training was found to improve well-being and reduce depression in those with a long history of depression" (Coote & MacLeod, 2012, p. 305). Some studies measured goal-setting in terms of improved self-efficacy. The results of a psychological dissertation study uncovered a connection between performance goals and self-efficacy (Naudi, 2012).

Further research is necessary to determine specific goal-setting combinations and/or goal characteristics.   The previously mentioned *Current Direction in Psychological Science* article suggested that future research explore different goal types, goal framing, goal cognition, goal hierarchy, and the relationship between conscious and subconscious goals (Locke & Latham, 2006, pp. 266-268). Additional research gaps were identified as it relates to self-efficacy measurements, goal sources, and goal timing. A *PLOS ONE* journal study acknowledged potential result contamination because they did not offer self-efficacy assessments pre-experiment—only post-experiment (Sommet et al. 2013, p. 10). Another *Current Directions in Psychological Science* article indicated that "goals are effective even when they come from different sources; they can be assigned by others, they can be set jointly through participation, and they can be self-set" (Locke & Latham, 2006, p. 265). Lastly, following a *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation* goal-setting experiment, future research was recommended on the optimal timing of goal setting to increase self-efficacy (Brinkman et al., 2020, p. 502). By measuring pre- and post-experiment, the researcher plans to evaluate goal types, goal sources, goal organization, and goal timing to uncover what goal attributes produce maximum self-efficacy.

Purpose

The purpose of this experimental study explored the theory that personal development goal-setting requires self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy. The researcher performed a comparative analysis of self-efficacy improvement, utilizing one control group and two experimental groups. The experimental groups' activities consisted of a 30-day guided personal development goal-setting program and a 60-day self-directed personal development goal-setting program. The control group independently chose their personal development goal-setting program.

The experimental groups' program included: *The Self-Directed Goal Theory* (Group 1- the researcher's original 60-day self-directed, personal development goal-setting program) and the *Manifest Anything You Want in 30 Days* book (Group 2- a 30-day guided, goal-setting program; Emanuele, 2013). The researcher used her original *Self-Directed Goal Theory* as a prototype.

Unlike the experimental groups, the control group (Group 3) did not follow pre-determined guidelines. They followed their own path to achieve their personal development goals. However, the control group was monitored throughout the experiment, at the 30- & 60-day marks. By offering autonomy, the researcher set a baseline, analyzed change impact, and located additional driving factors for improving self-efficacy.

Research Questions

This dissertation's Backdrop analogy is a true story. In her previous experience, the researcher only encountered guided self-help programs. These programs were not person-specific and her performance, in turn, was lackluster. But she could only take her

personal experience into account.   She questioned her own self-directed or self-efficacy

levels. She, in turn, developed a curiosity about self-directed or self-efficacy levels in

relation to guided or self-directed personal development goal-setting programs. These

inquiries provoked Research Question 2.

Despite its self-directed foundation, no known studies offered clear-cut

instructional planning for personal development goal-setting. Also, previous studies did

not offer definitive characteristics or optimal timing for personal development. These

findings prompted Research Questions 1 and 3.

The following research questions were investigated:

Research Question 1

What is the optimal timing for personal development goal-setting?

Research Question 2

With regard to self-efficacy improvement, what is the difference between guided

and self-directed personal development goal-setting?

Research Question 3

What specific personal development goal-setting characteristics are necessary to

maximize self-efficacy?

Hypotheses

Independent Variable

Since each group completed different personal development goal-setting

programs to improve self-efficacy, they were considered the independent variables.

Dependent Variable

Since self-efficacy was measured pre- and post-experiment, it was considered the dependent variable.

The hypotheses for this mixed methods study were as follows:

Hypothesis (H_0). Personal development goal-setting does not require self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a). Personal development goal-setting does require self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy.

Null Hypothesis 1 (μ_1). There will be no difference in self-efficacy between a control group and an experimental group completing the *Manifest Anything You Want in 30 Days* book (Emanuele, 2013).

Null Hypothesis 2 (μ_2). There will be no difference in self-efficacy between a control group and an experimental group completing *The Self-Directed Goal Theory*.

Significance

This study employed a two-pronged approach, rooted in grounded theory but grown as an instrumental case study. The current body of research suggested that personal development goal-setting improves self-efficacy. The study's overarching objective was to determine if personal development goal-setting required self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy; this is where the grounded theory approach applied. However, self-directedness was merely one probable component of optimal personal development goal-setting self-efficacy improvement. To the researcher's knowledge, no longitudinal research has been conducted on ideal goal timing. In fact, two journals spoke directly to this literature gap, recommending that future research

explore optimal timing of goal setting to increase self-efficacy (Brinkman et al., 2020, p. 502) and future research should "use a longitudinal design to develop interventions to improve well-being for young and older adults" (Chen et al., 2012, p. 751). A *Directions in Psychological Science* article referred to several plausible components of personal development goal-setting self-efficacy improvement, such as orientation, motivation, performance, framing, and complexity (Locke & Latham, 2006, pp. 266-268). As an experimental group, the researcher's *Self-Directed Goal Theory* not only allowed testing of the hypothesis; it served as an instrumental case study to identify a specific formula, specific timeframe, and specific source for maximum self-efficacy improvement—a target for achieving personal development goals.

The Self-Directed Goal Theory

In 2010, the researcher experienced this dissertation's Backdrop analogy. She channeled her frustration into an original plan—one catered to her life experiences, her personality, and her availability. She called it her Guide to Success (GTS). It included budgeting, common tasks, birthday reminders, school assignments/deadlines, and mini goals in various personal development areas. She broke tasks up by year, quarter, month, week, and day, ensuring that she tackled a different personal development area each month. Her initial plan stretched over an entire year.

Once drafted, she began her journey of trial and error. She kept a GTS journal to quickly note any familiar patterns, roadblocks, ideas, experiences, and motivators. On a monthly basis, she used her journal notes to modify and rework her plan—fine-tuning it to something more sensible. In her various personal development plan iterations, she made a few major changes; they were:

1. She shortened the timeframe from one year to 60 days; one year seemed too overwhelming and unattainable. Every 60 days, she had time and space to re-evaluate and shift directions.

2. She incorporated two weeks of preparation and six weeks of action into her plan; in her experience, proper planning produced better results.

3. She focused on two personal development areas at a time; in her experience, three weeks was more than sufficient to improve one personal development area.

4. She chose personal development areas that played an important part in her overall well-being.

5. She added virtues into her 60-day plan. After evaluating her behavior, she recognized that each goal failure accompanied an unchanged moral behavior. She was able to produce more positive results simply by cultivating virtue.

6. She added daily tasks and motivators to her plan; in her experience, daily repetition created habits and motivators provided the necessary push to complete tasks.

7. She added discovery questions to her plan to guide those with unclear goals.

8. She rebranded her 60-day plan as *The Self-Directed Goal Theory*—because her theory entailed andragogical undertones in a curriculum format.

Assumptions

Several assumptions can be drawn from this dissertation study. It was assumed that actions (researcher or participant-driven) would be congruent with the methodological steps. Besides, the methodology was detailed enough. Appendices were aplenty. Participants were carefully assessed. Group documents were succinct, allowing

participants to effortlessly follow steps. Most importantly, participants would follow

directions and report their results truthfully. But, in the words of the best-selling author,

Singh, "assumptions are the enemy of coherence" (Assumptions Quotes, n.d., para. 17).

Parts are not always in perfect alignment.

Limitations

This study included a combination of methodological and researcher limitations.

Researcher limitations involved unknown problems regarding bias, timing, or access.

Methodological Limitations

Methodological limitations impacted the prior research, study sample, and data.

See Table 1.

Researcher Limitations

Researcher limitations involved unknown problems regarding bias, timing, or

access. See Table 2.

Table 1. *Methodological Limitations*

Limitation	Description	Impact	Remediation
Demographic Survey (Appendix H)	The researcher created an original demographic survey.	When creating the original demographic survey, the researcher may have overlooked valuable demographic data.	The researcher noted any demographic survey findings in future recommendations.
Sample Size	The researcher aimed for a sample size of 15 participants.	The sample size did not account for dropped participants.	The researcher gathered 18 participants to ensure more reliable results.
Missing Data (Appendices A-D, Y, Z, and HH)	The researcher gathered experimental data via Self-Efficacy Assessment (pre and post), self-monitoring checklist, interview, and group documents.	The researcher did not account for incomplete documentation (i.e., assessments, checklists, interviews, and group documents).	The researcher analyzed received data and noted missing data in findings.
Self-reported Data (Appendices A-D, Y, Z, and HH)	The demographic survey, Self-Efficacy Assessment, self-monitoring checklist, interview, and group documents were self-reported.	Since all data was self-reported, the researcher had to assume participant responses were true.	The researcher took participant responses at face value and analyzed participant data from various angles.
Minimal Prior Research	The sub-topic, Personal Development Areas, had minimal peer-reviewed prior research.	Without ample scholarly research, the researcher could not provide a well-rounded perspective of the topic, Personal Development Areas. Most research was acquired via websites.	The researcher checked several websites to gather and compare research.

Group Document Instructions (Appendices A – D)	Each group was provided a group document with specific instructions to follow.	The researcher did not account for participants not following group document instructions.	The researcher analyzed participant data and noted potential instruction deviations.
Participation	All interested participants were entered into a $50 gift card raffle (whether they completed the experiment or not).	Some participants may have expressed interest due to the raffle.	The researcher noted this in future recommendations.
Convenience Sampling Method	The researcher used the convenience sampling method to acquire participants. The population was drawn from *Facebook* and *Instagram*.	Because the researcher used convenience sampling via social media, she was not able to disqualify participants due to demographic overpopulation.	The researcher noted this in future recommendations.
Staggered Participation	Participant generation was sporadic.	The researcher did not account for staggered participation, causing participants to begin their experiments at different times.	The researcher created data collection spreadsheets to track participant events and reviewed/updated it daily.
Data Recording	The researcher had to develop a process to record participant steps, interview data and pre/post assessment results.	Without a data recording method, the researcher would not have been able to organize and analyze data properly.	The researcher created data collection spreadsheets to keep track of, easily analyze, and report all participant data.
Ad Hoc Emails/Meetings	The researcher had to send unexpected participant	Each participant had unique situations	The researcher accommodated each

	emails and conduct ad hoc meetings.	throughout their experiment. This prompted additional emails and meetings for reasons such as coaching, additional instruction, participant life events, etc. Each participant had unique situations	participant by preparing emails, holding phone conversations, and conducting additional meetings.
Revised Emails (Appendices G, I-M, O-R, T, U, X, AA-FF, KK, and LL)	The researcher had to revise some individual participant emails to remove or add content.	throughout their experiment. This prompted email revisions to remove or add content such as reminders or removing completed tasks or duplicative information.	The researcher revised participant emails according to participants' specific situations.
Unresponsive Participants	The researcher had to develop a plan to handle unresponsive participants.	They researcher did not account for unresponsive participants. She had to decide on a cut-off point for communication and draft ad hoc emails for unresponsive participants.	The researcher contacted unresponsive participants three times. Each communication included a unique email.

Table 2. *Researcher Limitations*

Limitation	Description	Impact	Remediation
Participant Access	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, participant communication was conducted via email, phone, or virtual meeting platform.	Participants were limited on communication methods, causing a potential inconvenience and impersonality. Also, it limited the researcher's observation of participant nonverbal communication.	The researcher allowed participants to select their preferred communication channels. She also asked more impromptu questions during interviews and relied more on other data-gathering methods.
Experiment Length	The experiment consisted of three groups: one for 30 days and two for 60 days.	Participation was affected due to the necessary time commitment.	The researcher noted this in future recommendations.
Group 2 Program	The Group 2 program did not account for all personal development areas.	Participants had goals in personal development areas disproportionate to Group 2.	During the interview, the researcher asked impromptu questions related to goals to reveal potential group mismatches for reporting purposes.
Perfect Assessments	The researcher did not account for perfect pre-experiment Self-Efficacy Assessments.	Participants with a perfect pre-experiment Self-Efficacy Assessment had no room for post-experiment improvements.	The researcher relied on other data-gathering methods to show self-efficacy changes.

Scope

In this mixed methods study, the researcher recruited 15 participants from a *Facebook* and *Instagram* population size of 729. The geographic location was limited to U.S. participants only. Interested participants were asked to complete an 11-question demographic survey comprised of (1) gender, (2) age, (3) education, (4) race, (5) employment status, (6) general location, (7) marital status, (8) children, (9) mental health, (10) locus of control, and (11) self-regulation questions. Questions 1-9 were asked to ensure an unbiased sample. Questions 10-11 were asked to qualify participants; if participants submitted No responses, they were excluded from the study based on their external locus of control and/or self-regulatory failure. The researcher aimed for good generalizability by selecting demographic questions that endorsed participants from all walks of life. The experiment spanned over a 60-day timeframe: 30 days for Group 2 and 60 days for Groups 1 and 3.

Delimitations

The researcher made a conscious decision to embark on a flighty journey. The fact is, when it comes to personal development goal-setting, saying it and doing it are two different things. Although people set goals formally and informally, some fail to follow through because of lack of purpose, not defining their why, taking on too much, focusing on the negative, being overwhelmed, and fear (5 Critical Reasons, n.d., paras. 2-16). To further complicate matters, she selected the largest possible population size she could conceive, her social media following. In the researcher's experience, social media presented a level of unpredictability when it comes to demographics, commitment, and heartfelt data.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

Amotivation or Amotivated

"Amotivation refers to a lack of motivation. When amotivated, there is little or no intention or action." (Garibaldi, 2014, p. 7).

Authority

Individuals who are authoritative, credible, and knowledgeable experts in their fields are more influential and persuasive than those who are not. Part of the reason for this is that authority and credibility are some of the core building blocks of trust. When we trust people, we are more likely to follow them. (Cialdini's 6 Principles of Persuasion: A Simple Summary, n.d., para. 17)

Bandwagon Effect

It "is a psychological phenomenon in which people do something primarily because other people are doing it, regardless of their own beliefs, which they may ignore or override. This tendency of people to align their beliefs and behaviors with those of a group is also called a herd mentality. (Kelly, 2020, para. 1)

Constitutive Luck

"Luck in being the kind of person one is. Personal constitution may include contingent (e.g., inclinations, capacities, and temperament) as well as necessary features of a person. On the other hand, it may consist of necessary features only" (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2018, para. 1).

Cookie-Cutter

It is "marked by lack of originality or distinction" (Cookie-cutter, n.d., line 1).

Dissertation Anxiety

In dissertators, it is when "anxiety symptoms get triggered by various things—fear of failure, fear of success, perfectionism, unrealistic standards, and so on" (Walter, n.d., para. 5).

Dualistic Thought Process

It is believing "that Good and Evil – or God and the Devil – are independent and more or less equal forces in the world" (Robinson, 2020, para. 1).

Exposition

It "is the introduction to a story, including the primary characters' names, setting, mood, and time" (Plot Diagram, n.d., para. 1).

Flat Logic

The researcher created this compound word. Individually, flat is defined as being "lacking in animation, zest, or vigor" (Flat, n.d., line 7). Logic is described as "relevance, propriety" (Logic, n.d., line 1b2).

G.A.P.

"This acronym references Goal Setting, Action Planning and Progress Monitoring. It provides a holistic goal-setting system that has the potential to foster student-driven passion and self-motivation" (Alarcon, 2018, para. 1).

Neural Coding

Neural Coding

describes the study of information processing by neurons. Such studies seek to learn what information is used, and how information is transformed as it passes from one processing stage to another. The field of neural coding seeks to

synthesize information arising from many levels of analysis and explain how integrated behavior arises from the cooperative activity of the neurons in the brain. (Richmond, 2009, para. 1)

Ordinal Scale

It "is a scale (of measurement) that uses labels to classify cases (measurements) into ordered classes" (Ordinal Scale, n.d., para. 1).

Paradoxical Relationship

In a paradoxical relationship, power is contingent on the equal strength of each side of the pair. If one side is more powerful than the other, then the paradoxical relationship is weakened and the full potential of the pairing is not realized. (Michalec, 2019, para. 1)

Phronesis

Phronesis

is a Greek term which means 'practical wisdom' that has been derived from learning and evidence of practical things. Phronesis leads to breakthrough thinking and creativity and enables the individual to discern and make good judgements about what is the right thing to do in a situation. (Phronesis, n.d., para. 1)

Positive Affect

It "refers to one's propensity to experience positive emotions and interact with others and with life's challenges in a positive way" (Scott, 2020, para. 1).

Schematic Design

The goal of the schematic design stage is to settle on an overall design concept for the project. Every construction project starts with an idea. Typically, an owner has an idea for the project they want to be built. Transitioning from simply an idea to a workable and realistic design concept is the central goal purpose of the schematic design process. (Gilliland, 2019, para. 7)

Shoulda Coulda Woulda

This is a vintage three-word colloquialism, referencing what should have, could have, or would have been done (Coulda Shoulda Woulda Word History, Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2007).

Systems Thinking

"It is thinking about how things interact with one another" (Rutherford, 2019, p. 85).

Theoretical Substantiation

The researcher created this compound word. Individually, theoretical is defined as being "confined to theory or speculation often in contrast to practical applications" (Theoretical, n.d., line 2b). Substantiation is described as establishing "by proof or competent evidence" (Substantiation, n.d., line 2).

Yin and Yang

It is a complex relational concept in Chinese culture that has developed over thousands of years. Briefly put, the meaning of yin and yang is that the universe

is governed by a cosmic duality, sets of two opposing and complementing

principles or cosmic energies that can be observed in nature. (Shan, 2020, para. 1)

Summary

In Chapter One, the researcher isolated the andragogical term, self-directed

learning. She further introduced self-direction directives, such as personal development.

An analysis of conceptual and theoretical framework denoted personal development

ideations and provisions. A review of previous personal development goal-setting

literature, and notable gaps, were highlighted, guiding this study's purpose, research

questions, variables, and scope. Several limitations were also reported during the course

of the research.

The following chapter tied together three standalone subjects, Andragogy,

Psychology, and Philosophy. The researcher's subtopics (Self-Efficacy, Personal

Development Areas, Goal-Setting, Self-Monitoring Checklist, Self-Regulation, Locus of

Control, Motivation, and Virtue) investigated history, earlier research, cracks in

literature, and perceptible analogies. She filtered Andragogy down to its counterpart,

Self-directed Learning. Then, she explored the informal side of self-directedness,

personal development goal-setting.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

There is a fine line between psychology and education. Psychology studies a person's behavior, whereas education modifies their behavior. In fact, education bases itself on psychological principles. Those principles are evident when establishing educational objectives, preparing curriculum, improving teaching methods, identifying effective school organization, managing special needs, determining disciplinary actions, assessing instructors, evaluating lessons, and studying learners. (Relationship Between Education and Psychology, n.d., p. 1). Inherently, research studies that blend both fields represent systems thinking. The researcher's study, "*The Self-Directed Goal Theory* Experiment: A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy," explored and supported both fields: education and psychology. It also investigated different goal-setting attributes that contribute to improved self-efficacy and goal actualization.

The Psychological Introduction

The integration of education and psychology is not atypical; its roots reach as far back as the Greek philosophers, Aristotle and Plato. Their cognitive approach to education spawned a new field called educational psychology. The new field concentrated on human behavior as it relates to learning. (The Origins of Educational Psychology, 2019, paras. 1-4). It "describes and explains the learning experience of an individual from birth to old age. Its subject matter is concerned with the conditions that effect learning" (Sharma, n.d., para. 13).

Educational settings are not limited to classrooms, desks, or chalkboards. Beyond formal education, some people pursue their own path to professional and personal growth

(Stevens, 2016, para. 5). Development (whether professional or personal) is still considered learning. Personal development aligns with being a lifelong learner, allowing a person to grow emotionally and intellectually (Scott, 2020, para. 2). Becoming a lifelong learner is the direct route to personal development and involves consistent thoughts and actions, or growth orientation. It requires intentional, daily work (Tracy, n.d., paras. 7-8). Personal development planning is unique to the individual. Plans concentrate on specific timeframes, targeted personal development areas, well-defined goal setting and constant evaluation (Valchanova, 2018, paras. 5-21). Most importantly, personal development requires self-directedness—an andragogical term and psychological character dimension (What is the Temperament and Character Inventory?, n.d., para. 3).

Self-directedness requires motivation. The motivational aspect of self-directed learning includes an intricate collection of cognitive processes, such as self-monitoring, self-efficacy, personal goal-setting, outcome expectations, and affective self-reactions (Bandura, 1997, para. 70).

Self-directedness correlates with a person's character. Character is a combination of mind, soul, and backbone (Mertz, 2016, para. 13). It involves two elements: personal inclinations (where self-directedness lives) and moral duty (where virtue dwells) (Henriques, 2013, para. 5). Since virtue is grounded in self-improvement, the question arose whether virtue development plays a part in constitutive luck. This information suggested that self-directed learners (pursuing personal development) may benefit more from internal and external work. The researcher's original *Self-Directed Goal Theory*

formula builds character by focusing on self-directedness, lifelong learning, motivation, and virtue.

The Educational Introduction

The educational theory, Andragogy, separates the teaching of children from the teaching of adults. It employs a more strategic approach to adult learning. It coined the term, self-directed learning, recognizing an adult's desire to actively participate in their learning process (Kurt, 2020). Self-directed learning is not limited to a classroom setting; it involves any area where self-direction and learning reside—even when it comes to goal setting. Studies show that "goal setting training is effective in the enhancement of student's achievement motivation and self-directed learning" (Hematian et al., 2017, p. 43). Self-directed learning acknowledges the adult learner's differences (in comparison to a child learner). When acknowledging those differences, personality type, learning style, cognitive style, past experience, and personal situation cannot be ignored. All these factors contribute to their personal development (Jennings, 2011). One particular *HOW* journal study dug deeper into personal development, revealing that self-efficacy is a product of goal setting (Ballesteros Muñoz et al., 2014).

Learners can monitor their own performance in various ways—self-monitoring checklists being one of them. Self-monitoring checklists allow learners of any age to record their actions and behavior and increase focus and awareness (Self Monitoring, 2017). Even though self-monitoring checklists identify as a pedagogical tool, the andragogical undertones cannot be ignored. Self-monitoring encourages independence—the definitive meaning of self-directed learning (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support of Self-Monitoring, para. 1). For this reason, the researcher

utilized this data collection method to identify meaningful patterns and themes in her experiment.

Self-monitoring is not the only tool that stems from child development. Self-regulation is another learned behavior. Self-regulation separates feeling from action—it exists as the pause between the recognized problem and the carefully-considered solution. It allows people to handle themselves appropriately and cope with situations that do not work in their favor (Cuncic, 2020, paras. 1-10).

Another tool, not specific to Pedagogy but essential in life, is locus of control. Locus of control involves optimistic or pessimistic thought processes. It contrasts between a person believing they have control over what happens (internal locus of control) and believing they have no control at all (external locus of control). Locus of control is important because it impacts motivation to act and, if a person's actions have no bearing on their outcome, their motivation might diminish (Cherry, 2019, paras. 1-5). Locus of control is urgent when it comes to goal setting—because goal achievement depends on effort—and why would a person try for no reason? For this purpose, the researcher utilized these two topics as disqualifiers on her pre-experiment demographic survey.

The Typical Introduction

The researcher's study, *The Self-Directed Goal Theory* Experiment: A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy, sought to examine the constraints of self-directed learning by introducing a new learning environment—personal development. It explored the theory that self-directedness is the elixir to quality personal development programs. Based on the study findings, it

uncovered longitudinal data on personal development goal-setting timeframes and established a special formula for goal achievement.

This literature review vehicle outlines topics connected to the study's purpose and scope. Andragogy is the overarching topic, steering the wheel toward the next topic, Self-Directed Learning. The topic, Self-Efficacy, serves as the driver—the probable impetus for goal achievement. The topic, Personal Development Areas, breaks down all the engineering under the hood—all the plausible self-development approaches. The topic, Goal-Setting, illustrates how each engineering component works together to drive personal development. The topics, Self-Monitoring Checklists, Self-Regulation, and Locus of Control are the proverbial backseat drivers—advising self-efficacy levels. Lastly, the topics, Motivation and Virtue, serve as the gas, keeping the driver in motion.

In this literature review, the researcher defined and provided history on each topic to broaden the reader's perspective. She conducted research on foreign and local studies to add texture to her own study. Additionally, each research topic was analyzed to pinpoint cogency, validation, and relevance.

Andragogy

A prominent German philosopher, Schopenhauer, once said "Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody as thought" (Research is to See What Everybody Else Has Seen and Think What Nobody Has Thought, 2015, para. 2). This quote accurately illustrates a German high school teacher's educational breakthrough. Nearly 200 years ago, Kapp discovered the adult education concept and labeled it as Androgogik (Andragogy) (Andragogy II, n.d., para. 3). Although his book, *Platon's Erziehungslehre* (Plato's Educational Ideas), centered on child education, he

shifted his focus to adult education on page 241. His book described "the educational

theory of the Greek philosopher, Plato" (Andragogy II, n.d., para. 2). Based on research

and reflection, he observed that "learning happens not through teachers, but also through

self-reflection and life experience" (Henschke, 2016, p. 2). As an example, he "referred

to vocational education of the healing profession, soldier, orator, ruler and men as the

family father" (Henschke, 2016, p. 2).

 Although Kapp's discovery inspired the divergence between child and adult

education, it merely scratched the surface.   The idea of adult education was not foreign;

several initiatives and terms existed for the sake of adult learning. Slapping a fresh term

on a well-known concept did not sway the masses. Andragogy existed as a

justification—with no theoretical substantiation (Andragogy II, n.d., para. 3). This may

be the reason why the term "lay fallow for many decades" (Henschke, 2016, p. 2).

 The word, theory, is defined as an unapproved assumption—a hypothesis

assumed for the sake of argument or investigation (Theory, n.d., para. 1). Based on the

definition, Andragogy fulfilled the criteria of a theory. However, its theoretical

characteristics were not reconsidered until the mid-1920's. Post-war Germany welcomed

theoretical assumptions (Andragogy II, n.d., para. 6). Intellectual development became a

priority—with science and philosophy at the forefront (Weimar Culture and the

Reputation for Decadence, n.d.). It can be assumed that, given Kapp's philosophical

focus, Andragogy was resurrected. A group of scholars spotlighted Andragogy,

considering it the 'Neue Richtung' (new direction) in adult education (Andragogy II, n.d.,

para. 6). Andragogy regained its popularity when authors offered "explicit reflections

related to the why, what for and how of teaching adults" (Andragogy II, n.d., para. 6).

The term shifted from 'justification' to 'theory-oriented' (Andragogy II, n.d., para. 6).

The theory-oriented term, Andragogy, resurfaced with a newfound respect. As opposed to its antonym, Demagogy (which is difficult to handle and forgotten), Andragogy was viewed as simple and memorable—a solid foundation to build upon. In a 1921 German report, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy (Greene & Larsen, 2018, p. 1381), expressed that "adult education required special teachers, methods and philosophy, and he used the term andragogy to refer collectively to these special requirements" (Andragogy II, n.d., para. 5).

Five years later, an English writer, Lindeman, traveled to Germany and became a part of the Workers Education Movement. He introduced the term, Andragogy, to the United States—focusing more on adult education than the term itself (Henschke, 2016, p. 2). Unfortunately, adult educators had limited knowledge and no academic course of study; in turn, the idea of adult education and Andragogy fizzled out (Andragogy II, n.d., para. 8). Nearly 30 years later, Andragogy suddenly began to circle the map, making publication appearances in Switzerland, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia (Andragogy II, n.d., para. 8), and Great Britain (Henschke, 2016, p. 3). However, like its brief United States introduction, it straddled the theory and practice paradigm (Andragogy II, n.d., para. 8).

Before Andragogy was reintroduced to the United States, there was simply education. Adult and child education mirrored each other. Learning styles were parallel. Environments were congruent. That is, until Knowles popularized Andragogy in 1968. "Knowles acquired the term in 1966 from Savicevic" (Henschke, 2016, p. 3), a Yugoslavian adult educator (Fidishun, 2012). His 1968 article, *Andragogy, Not*

Pedagogy (Andragogy II, n.d., para. 9), blended his own adult education experience with Savicevic's insight (Henschke, 2016, p. 3). Unlike Andragogy's philosophical infancy, Knowles offered a more comprehensive term description.

Knowles revealed distinct differences between adults and children. The different age groups were dubbed as the Greek-originated terms, Pedagogy and Andragogy. The term differences lie in the first and second term syllables. Both terms utilize the same second Greek syllable, ago, translated as "guide" in the English language. However, the pronunciation of the first Greek syllable, paidi (or ped), is translated as "child" and the second Greek syllable, andras (or andra), is translated as "man." Based on the phonetical descriptions, it can be inferred that Pedagogy represents child-focused education and Andragogy represents adult-focused education (Pappas, 2015, paras. 1-2).

Although the terms' descriptions are phonetically accurate, Knowles offered more insight into Pedagogy and Andragogy. He founded Andragogy on six assumptions: self-concept (who facilitates the learning), experience (what tools are necessary to learn), readiness to learn (what the justification to learn), orientation to learning (what is most important in the lesson) and motivation to learn (how learners are inspired) (Kurt, 2020, para. 7). In Pedagogy, the teacher facilitates education by gathering resources, planning curriculum, and sequencing subject matter. Also, children are externally motivated (by parents, teachers, or competition) (Heick, 2015, para. 1). On the other hand, Andragogy encourages student autonomy and self-direction, and adults learn based on their own (or familiar) experience. The sheer independence of Andragogy inspires intrinsic motivation (by self-esteem, confidence, or recognition) (Heick, 2015, para. 1).

Like the mirrors of a kaleidoscope, Andragogy has always been viewed from copious angles and colorful perspectives. Since fruition, educators have regarded it as a justification, an idea, a theory, an assumption, a concept, a philosophy, a teaching description, a scientific discipline, a mechanical tool/technique, and a strategy (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, pp. 56-57).

Some have even characterized Andragogy as being egotistical and elitist. On the contrary, Andragogy represents diversity—possessing educational requirements so expansive that it required its own discipline (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, pp. 56-57). "Physiologically, psychologically and sociologically, adults are more diverse than children" (Galbraith, 2004, p. 25). Physiological variables represent auditory, visual, energy, and health requirements. Psychological and sociological variables represent cognitive, personality, experiential, and role characteristics (Galbraith, 2004, pp. 25-35).

Despite its progressive definitions, Andragogy has "been subject to criticism from the academic world and practitioners" (The Training & Development World, 2019, para. 1). They have called it vague, inconclusive, and contradictory (Rachel, 2002, pp. 210-211). When referring to its instability, many have cited an "absence of operational definition" (Rachel, 2002, p. 212). Based on their views, the concept of Andragogy speculates that (Adult Learning and Andragogy Critiques, 2019, paras. 2-3; Rachel, 2002, pp. 213-221):

- Adults control their learning.

- Adults are self-directed learners.

- All adults benefit from Andragogy.

- Adults succeed in learning situations.

- Adults voluntarily participate in their learning experience.

- Andragogy offers a satisfactory adult learning experience.

- Adults must utilize a learning contract to assess achievement.

- The physical and psychological environments of adult learning must emulate Knowles' guidelines.

In his journal article, *Andragogy's Detectives: A Critique of the Present and a Proposal for the Future*, Rachel (2002) elaborated that learner choice and instructor input is 50/50 (p. 216), being an adult does not guarantee maturity, external motivation drives involuntary participation (p. 220), variables of interest must be considered when measuring satisfaction (p. 222), achievement can be conclusively assessed in black-or-white (successful or not successful) (p. 221), and learning atmospheres must align with the instructor's characteristics (p. 223). Another *Training & Development World* online article suggests that self-directedness is developed through learning and exposure and being an adult does not assure self-directedness (Believing All Adults Are Self-Directed Learners, n.d., para. 2); children can be self-directed too (Believing All Adults Are Self-Directed Learners, n.d., para. 5). It also indicates that some adults exhibit non-adult behavior when in learning situations (Believing Adults Will Act Like Adults When in Learning Situations, n.d., para. 2).

According to an *Adult Education Quarterly* journal article, successful adult learning cannot be concocted; it should not be considered an antidote comprised of learning preconditions, curing the educational experience when administered. Adult learning is fluid and formless. All learning (whether child or adult) is determined by three primary factors—"the learner's ability, the learner's motivation and the

teacher/facilitator factors (such as style, ability and methodology" (Rachel, 2002, p. 224).

However, Knowles never commanded mass conformity. The very fact that he defined

adult learning in terms of "assumptions" suggested objectivity. Adults who deviated

from his assumptions were viewed as outliers. Statistically, outliers are "markedly

differently in value from the others of the sample" (Outlier, n.d. para. 1). Outliers

"capture valuable information that is part of your study area" (Frost, n.d., para. 18). In

essence, Knowles' consideration for adult outliers encouraged the future evolution of

Andragogy.

Among educators, there is a clear dearth of consensus that the once hopeful

concept, Andragogy, has fallen into disrepute. In fact, "the inference might be that

Andragogy in general has so fallen from fashion that it holds little more than antiquarian

interest" (Rachel, 2002, p. 212). However, before conceding to an infinite hibernation,

educators must dissect two of Knowles' enduring beliefs: lifelong learning (Learning

Theories in FOCUS: Adult Learning Principles, 2019, para. 1) and self-directed learning

(Learning theories in FOCUS: Adult Learning Principles, 2019, para. 4).

Lifelong learning is rooted in various cultures and generations. It "is constructed

on four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to

be" (Guo & Shaun, 2019, p. 114). These pillars allow people to understand their

environment, discover skills, know how to communicate, utilize their knowledge, respect

individual differences, make solid judgements, and behave responsibly (Guo & Shaun,

2019, p. 114). The results of a research study on lifelong learning among Chinese older

adults revealed a fervent emphasis on lifelong learning. The concentration stemmed from

"historical and political events, Chinese traditions, moralities, and social values" (Guo &

Shaun, 2019, p. 111). In Chinese culture, learning extends beyond the classroom walls;

learning is perpetual (Guo & Shaun, 2019, p. 11). Lifelong learning is known as the

"enduring resource," promising freedom, choice, tolerance, confidence, vitality, and

happiness for older adults (Guo & Shaun, 2019, p. 115-121). Nearly 5000 miles away, a

Kenyan study revealed that "Pedagogy, Andragogy, and Heutogogy in lifelong learning"

positively impacted livelihoods. This conception also extended beyond formal education

(Carr et al., 2018, p. 69). Another United States study, targeting older adults, showed the

significance of lifelong learning (Hansen et al., 2016, p. 49). Based on the *Population*

Reference Bureau's Population Bulletin, the current growth of the population ages 65 and

older, driven by the baby boom generation, is unprecedented in U.S. history—and this

generation invites economic, infrastructural, and institutional opportunities (Mather et al.,

2019, paras. 1-2).

> Andragogy favors a myriad of learning environments—both formal and informal.
> As he aged, Knowles focused increasingly on informal adult education, seeking a
> more comprehensive and thorough approach to adult learning. Knowles
> recognized the distinction between formal and informal educational settings and
> the benefits of learning in each. He felt that formal settings, which included
> educational programs and institutions, were best for learning new, intensive
> material. Informal settings, including community centers, workplaces, and houses
> of worship were best for the application of practical skills and development of
> interests. (Kurt, 2020, para. 6)

However, informal education options are more capacious than Knowles

suggested. Based on the book, *Adult Learning: Linking Theory & Practice,* "informal

learning activities are embedded in one's everyday life" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 16). When defining Andragogy, Merriam and Bierema added that the individual is "at the center of the learning transaction, where self-direction and independence are valued, and where learning leads to personal growth and fulfillment" (p. 54). Perhaps, since the formal aspect of Andragogy has faced so much criticism, further considerations can be made informally. Besides, learning never ceases—whether instructed or self-directed— on an academic or personal basis.

Self-Directed Learning

Andragogy represents adult learner characteristics whereas self-directed learning embodies one significant characteristic—adults who guide their own learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 65). Between the 1960s and 1970s, published scholarly works generated incessant chatter about the self-directed learning concept (Morris, 2019, p. 636). "Knowles defined self-directed learning as adult students' ability to self-manage their own learning" (Yang et al., 2020, p. 100). Due to this definition's foundation in Andragogy, it may have set a "formal learning" tone. On the contrary, it leaves room for broad interpretation. A *Journal of Research on Christian Education* article suggested that

> the view by Knowles and colleagues of self-directed learning arguably conforms
> to the anthropological norm stated previously in that they take pains to describe
> self-directed learning not as a self-contained, mechanistic, automatic, technical,
> and deterministic process but as one in which human beings take the initiative,
> with or without the help of others. (van der Walt, 2019, p. 13)

Based on van der Walt's interpretation of self-directed learning, formal instruction is not a necessity; in fact, self-directed learning can be non-academic, individualistic, and free flowing. A 2020 documentary, *Self-Taught: Life Stories from Self-Directed Learners*, offered three awe-striking statements on self-directed learning. One stated, "The way I learn the best is just by doing. Then, I like my own space and I like my own time and I like to choose how that time is spent—and school is none of those things." Another said, "no matter how much we've gone to formal schools, most of what we know as meaningful to us comes from self-directed education." In his self-directed learning interpretation, another added, "I think, in education, it is the capacity to author your own life instead of merely accepting the one you've been handed" (Films for Action, 2020). Essentially, self-directed learning is Andragogy's immortal component.

Personal interest inspires self-directed learning. A Bonk et al. (2015) study referenced in the *International Review of Education* journal revealed that self-directed learners

> named curiosity, interest, and internal need for self-improvement as key motivational factors, especially to gain specific skills and general skill to help them to advance in their careers. Factors that led to success or personal change included the freedom to learn, an abundance of resources, as well as choice, control, and fun. (Morris, 2019, p. 644)

Two bodies of research determined that some adult learners were goal-oriented, some were motivated by human interaction, some seek knowledge for knowledge's sake, and some spend umpteen hours on self-coordinated projects (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p.

45). Independent learning is a necessity for personal growth and fulfillment (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 54).

Self-directed learning also contributes to the betterment of educators. In their own professional development, educators are given "responsibility, choice, and involvement in the planning of their learning" (Porter & Freeman, 2020, p. 38). The *Professional Educator* journal conducted a research study to investigate potential engagement shifts when employing self-directed learning principles in educators' professional development. The results revealed nine themes, confirming "the potential effectiveness of self-directed professional development in providing meaningful learning experiences that result in educators' professional growth and improvements in their practice" (Porter & Freeman, 2020, pp. 40-44).

The notion of self-directed learning has been approached from several angles. At its core, many people perceive it as an innate human characteristic. They also see it as independent and informal—not an educational fad (Garrison, 1997, p. 19). The following education professionals aligned with this relaxed approach:

- In the book, *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice*, Merriam and Bierema (2014) explained that "self-directed learning, an area of research and theory-building in adult education, is considered to be largely informal, although one can certainly choose to take a class as part of a self-directed learning project" (p. 18).
- A Colorado adult education leader (Caffarella, n.d., para. 2), Caffarella, presented three key ideas of self-directed learning: self-initiation, autonomy, and learner control (Yang, Su & Bradley, 2020, p. 100).

- An Emeritus adult and continuing education professor (Mezirow, n.d., para. 1), Mezirow, pinpointed two crucial self-directed learning traits: the "awareness of meaning and self-knowledge" (Garrison, 1997, p. 19).

- Oddi, a Northern Illinois University adult education expert (Oddi, n.d., para. 1), concocted the *Continuing Learning Inventory* (OCLI), a 24-item instrument of personality factors derived from the most "important element of learner self-direction" (Garrison, 1997, p. 19).

- Hammond, a mental health author and speaker (My Story: Merryl Hammond, PhD; n.d., para. 1), and Collins, a Kellogg College Oxford University psychology professional (n.d., para. 1), expressed that self-directed learning is much more than just personal learning needs; it requires "a larger social and emancipatory perspective" (Garrison, 1997, p. 20).

- Brookfield (n.d.), a higher education professional and adult education author (para. 1), believed that the fusion of "external activities and internal reflective dimensions" triggers self-direction (Garrison, 1997, p. 19).

Some education professionals merged formal and informal viewpoints, straddling the self-directed fence. A New York adult and continuing education expert (Hiemstra, n.d., para. 1), Hiemstra, indicated that adults have "the capacity to plan, navigate, and evaluate their own learning on the path to their personal learning goals" (Yang et al., 2020, p. 100). However, Hiemstra shifted his focus from traditional learning goals to congenial behavior traits when working alongside a University of Tennessee adult education advisor (Brockett, n.d., para. 1), Brockett. Together, they established a

framework, "expanding the self-directed learning construct to include a personality disposition" (Garrison, 1997, p. 19).

Other education professionals shared more meticulous (and perceivably academic) beliefs. For example, a University of Alberta professor and adult education expert, Garrison (1997, p. 18) introduced a thorough self-directed learning model, focusing on motivation and cognitive learning aspects. His "model integrated three overlapping dimensions" as it relates to educational settings: external management, internal monitoring, and motivation (Yang et al., p. 100). A humanistic psychologist, Rogers (McLeod, 2014, para. 1), believed that "self-direction was largely about taking responsibility for the internal cognitive and motivational aspects of learning" (Garrison, 1997, p. 19). A University of Georgia education professor (Hill, n.d., para. 1), Hill, and Towson University instructional technology program director (Liyan Song, n.d., para. 1), Song, focused on self-directed learning in an online setting, resolving that it produced "better online teaching and learning experiences" (Yang et al., 2020, p. 100). Education professional, Long, split self-directed learning into three subjects: sociology, pedagogy, and psychology (Garrison, 1997, p. 19). An assistant professor at King Saud University regarded "self-directed learning as a number of skills to be mastered by learners, including time management, stress management, assignment preparation, examination preparation, note-taking, problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, clinical judgment (in the case of nursing students), and knowledge acquisition" (Homood Alharbi, n.d., para. 1).

Theoretically, "a prime characteristic of adulthood is the need and capacity to be self-directing" (Porter & Freeman, 2020, p. 38). However, suggesting that self-direction

equals legal age is no different than suggesting that being a student equals studiousness. Self-direction is not innate. Although every adult has the 'capacity', self-direction is acquired by cooperating with and learning from others (Rogers, 2021, p. 124). Additionally, self-directed learning "is not all or nothing. Every learner is different and has different levels of self-directedness" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 65).

Copious research illustrated a correlation between self-directed learning and self-efficacy—some inferred and some overt. Two inferred studies revealed inconsistencies in self-directed learning readiness. After surveying 541 Taiwanese adult education students, one study showed that self-directed learning readiness was preferred in online learning environments (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 73). A conflicting study uncovered a pedagogical undertone in Chinese education—a "teacher-centered, information-based, test-driven instructional method" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 77). Unfortunately, this educational method presented cultural challenges when Chinese learners attended Western universities. This leniency adjustment may have negatively impacted academic efficacy (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 77). Another *International Review of Education* article described self-efficacy traits when spotlighting a few empirical studies. It listed "conscientiousness, openness, optimism, and work drive as some of the potentially important traits that determine self-directedness" (Morris, 2019, p. 649).

When referencing self-directed learning, some research explicitly mentioned self-efficacy. After investigating "the relationship between self-directedness and biographical factors" (Botha & Coetzee, 2016, p. 242) among South African students at an open distance learning higher education institution, an *International Review of Research in Open & Distance Learning* journal confirmed that self-directedness varied based on

gender, race, and age (Botha & Coetzee, 2016, p. 242). Although the study population targeted African students who were historically disadvantaged (presumably, to add an additional layer to the study), the findings uncovered obstacles that surpassed skin color (Botha & Coetzee, 2016, p. 246). Self-directed learning readiness increased with age—conceivably because of life's assorted obligations. Also, male science students were more engaged than female science students. Reio and Davis (2005) and Huang (2013) reported similar observations in their experiments—one revealing that female South African students lacked self-efficacy in male-prominent study areas and another revealing that North American and European male students possess a higher academic self-efficacy than their female counterparts (Botha & Coetzee, 2016, p. 248).

Self-Efficacy

Geometrically, the line of self-directed learning runs parallel to self-efficacy. One cannot exist without the other. Two empirical studies supported this kindred supposition. In their book, Merriam and Bierema (2014) discussed "a popular self-directed application called GROW based on the developmental stages of self-directed learning" (pp. 69-70). It acknowledged the analogous relationship between self-directed learning and self-efficacy when identifying the application's four stages: "dependent lacking self-direction, interested confident, involved engaged as self-directed learners possess knowledge and self-efficacy for self-directed learning and self-directed learners able to plan, execute, and evaluate learning" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, pp. 69-70). Another *International Education Studies* experiment evaluated the relationship between self-directed-learning readiness, academic self-efficacy, and achievement motivation in students. Their research exposed a significant relationship between self-directed learning and academic

self-efficacy and motivation (Saeid & Eslaminejad, 2016, p. 229). The article recognized other complementary experiments (replacing the phrase, self-directed learning, for the words, achievement or motivation). A Davari et al. (2011) experiment revealed "that academic self-efficacy has a significant contribution in the prediction of goals of achievement" (Saeid & Eslaminejad, 2016, p. 230). Another Ferla et al. (2009) experiment disclosed that "the most predictive academic performance is academic motivation" (Saeid & Eslaminejad, 2016, p. 230). Lastly, Rouhi et al. (2014) experiment "concluded that student's beliefs in their abilities for doing things associated with their academic motivation and improvement of self-efficacy can affect academic motivation of students" (Saeid & Eslaminejad, 2016, p. 230). These studies spoke directly to academic self-efficacy—an example of mean efficacy. "External resources also impact behavior" (Yaakobi, 2018, p. 381), such as collective efficacy (relationship-influenced) and mean efficacy (mean/tool-influenced) (Yaakobi, 2018, p. 382). However, 'true' self-efficacy is internally influenced (Yaakobi, 2018, p. 381).

Further investigation into collective efficacy unearthed perceivably the closest type of connection—familial relationships. Although these connections can be enduring, it does not always happen (Different Types of Relationships, n.d., paras. 2-5). Two studies analyzed the competence of parental self-efficacy. After studying the relationship between paternal self-efficacy and children's behavioral problems in Korea, Shim & Lim (2019) discovered that "fathers' parenting self-efficacy was positively linked to positive controlling behavior" (p. 856). This finding aligned with previous studies, revealing that self-efficacy increased when the parent took on a more authoritarian role. Three studies established that mothers with a high parenting self-efficacy possessed autocratic parental

traits, spurring compliant, non-aggressive children; mothers with low parenting self-efficacy produced a reverse effect (p. 852-853). Shim and Lim's (2019) research refuted earlier findings, unveiling those fathers played a bigger role in regulating children's behavior (p. 856).

Other collective efficacy research quantitatively "examined the relationship between paternal self-efficacy and parenting behaviors often associated with paternal depression" (Trahan & Shafer, 2019, p. 101). Paternal self-efficacy represents a father's beliefs of his parental competence. Unlike mothers, fathers do not have the luxury of building prenatal connections; paternal bonds are created postnatally—the first two months after birth (Trahan & Shafer, 2019, p. 102).   This study showed that depressed fathers have warmer parent-child relationships—and the very comfortability of the connection manifested higher paternal self-efficacy (Trahan & Shafer, 2019, p. 107-108). A similar study found correlations between a father's adverse situational experiences and their paternal self-efficacy. Fathers who were consistently exposed to violent circumstances were more "involved and efficacious with their children, potentially as a function of their self-efficacy as protectors" (Trahan & Shafer, 2019, p. 102).

Self-efficacy connoisseurs confidently navigate their lives, manufacturing successes and mitigating obstacles. An influential social cognitive psychologist (best known for his social learning theory on self-efficacy), Bandura, (as cited in Cherry, 2020a, para. 1), congruently characterized them as producers of their own future, rather than simply foretelling it (Self Efficacy Quotes, n.d., para. 9). Bandura formally defined self-efficacy "as one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task" (Saeid & Eslaminejad, 2016, p. 226). His theory integrated behavior,

cognition, and the environment by exposing three criterions: observational learning, imitation, and modeling (Cherry, 2020a, para. 12). Bandura conducted the infamous Bobo doll study, filming an adult model aggressively beating and shouting at a Bobo doll. After showing the film to children, he allowed them to play with the doll. He observed the children imitating the model's actions, beating and shouting at the doll (Cherry, 2020a, paras. 14-15). In Bandura's later work, he expounded on his theory, recognizing personal control. He coined the term, self-efficacy, when he suggested that "people with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided" (Cherry, 2020a, para. 18).

Bandura correlated self-efficacy with intrinsic motivation (Power et al., 2019, p. 283). However, he introduced two intrinsically motivated and two extrinsically motivated sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, emotional arousal, social modeling, and social persuasion. The sources stipulated the driving factors of self-efficacy. Mastery experiences represented a person's successful outcomes. Emotional arousal spoke to a person's emotional response to a task. Social modeling observed another person's successes. Social persuasion reflected upon another person's skills (Gulmez & Negis Isik, 2020, p. 328).

Reminiscent of Chinese philosophical principles, self-efficacy bears a yin and yang—a positive and negative. "Physical conditions or poor results" (Solpuk, 2020, pp. 56-57) may test resilience. However, some instances lack malleability. Bandura acknowledged that "cultural values and practices affect how efficacy beliefs are developed" (Lin et al., 2017, p. 361). A *Social Psychology of Education* mixed-methods study researched the self-efficacy of 56 Chinese undergraduate students, revealing

"differences in the types and frequencies of sources of self-efficacy when considering increases or decreases in confidence and individual characteristics such as GPA, only child status and fear of failure" (Lin et al., 2017, p. 361). Other self-efficacy studies such as Joe¨t et al. (2011), Klasson (2004), and Ahn et al. (2016a, 2016b) uncovered cultural self-efficacy variances. Joe¨t et al. recognized self-efficacy differences in French elementary school students. Klasson discovered self-efficacy differences in Indo-Canadian collectivists and Anglo-Canadian individualists. Ahn et al. found that social persuasions in Korean and U.S. students swayed self-efficacy (as cited in Lin et al., 2017, pp. 364-365).

Obstinate beliefs, such as gender inequality, cultural practices, and racism also affect self-efficacy. A popular nursery rhyme lyricized, shed light on the juxtaposition between boys and girls.

What are little boys made of?

What are little boys made of?

Snips and snails

And puppy-dogs' tails,

That's what little boys are made of.

What are little girls made of?

What are little girls made of?

Sugar and spice

And everything nice,

That's what little girls are made of (What Are Little Boys Made Of, n.d., para. 5).

When referencing gender inequality, a *Forbes* article further articulated that "the stubbornness of this problem lies in the fact that it is rooted in our societal beliefs about men, women, and leadership. We believe men should be 'agentic' (assertive, decisive, strong) and women should be 'communal' (warm, caring, sympathetic)" (Locke, 2019, para. 3). In a sense, the *Forbes* article mirrored the nursery rhyme. It sparked the question whether the rhyme was purely innocent or the precursor to gender inequality. Self-efficacy beliefs are formed "in early childhood through dealing with a wide variety of experiences, tasks, and situations" (Cherry, 2020a, para. 13). Based on this fact, it comes as no surprise that gender bias may take a toll on self-efficacy.

The results of a Turkish meta-analysis study, examining gender effects on academic self-efficacy, confirmed that women possessed a lower self-efficacy than men (Solpuk, 2020, p. 64). These findings coincided with two prior studies: one concluding that "male students' sense of academic self-efficacy is stronger" and another determining that "females had a weaker sense of self-efficacy compared to males" (Solpuk, 2020, p. 64). When investigating gender role socialization and career decision self-efficacy, a South Korean study uncovered "that female students with nontraditional gender role attitudes showed higher levels of self-efficacy in their pursuit of higher education or a prestigious career" (Shin et al, 2019, p. 76). Conversely, women who identified with traditional gender roles reflected the opposite (Shin et al., p. 76). Despite the surge in modernistic mindsets, the South Korean culture remains conventional (Shin et al., 2019, p. 84).

Culture consists of shared "beliefs, behaviors, objects, and other characteristics" among certain groups or societal affiliations (Culture and Society Defined, n.d., para. 1).

Certain societal aspects serve as the decision-makers, such as "language, customs, values, norms, mores, rules, tools, technologies, products, organizations, and institutions" (para. 1). Based on these cultural aspects, people define themselves (para. 1), draw perceptions (para. 2), and take actions (para. 1). An e-book, *The Role of Science Teachers' Beliefs in International Classrooms*, translated culture into "mental programming," suggesting a herd mindset (Evans, 2014, p. 35). This programming manipulates goals/implementation and deprioritizes self-efficacy. An *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* article explored the effects of cultural sensitivity and self-efficacy after study abroad experiences. By simply embracing diversity, students improved their self-efficacy and cultural competence. However, students in a Nicaragua program were identified as the anomaly, rating "themselves higher in cultural awareness, competence, and self-efficacy than the rest of the students at pre-study abroad" (de Diego-Lázaro et al., 2020, pp. 1896-1898). This outlier hinted that, since cultural sensitivity was not a factor, no self-efficacy improvements were necessary.

With respect to culture's societal aspects, three peer-reviewed articles spotlighted value and tools. Participants in an Indonesian research study felt that value begot civility. Research measured the correlation between teacher politeness and self-efficacy from the student's perspective (Mudiono, 2019, p. 427). The researcher identified shortfalls in emotional intelligence and competitiveness among Indonesian students. Students relied heavily on teacher politeness to effectively learn (Mudiono, 2019, p. 429).

Participants in a Kenyan and Polish study believed that tools translated to scarcity. One cross-sectional study evaluated parallels between Kenyan doctoral students' success and self-efficacy (Matheka et al., 2020, p. 115). The findings did not

ascertain any driving factors for success. Whether low or high, self-efficacy or motivation had no impact on PhD student success (Matheka et al., 2020, p. 123). The article did, however, explain that PhD students were extremely busy, due to medical practitioner scarcity in Kenya (Matheka et al., 2020, p. 125). In this case, it may be possible that duty outweighed self-efficacy. Another study researched Polish teacher efficacy. The researcher offered a disclaimer, stating that "Poland was still in the process of educational changes" (Narkun & Smogorzewska, 2019, p. 111). Although results showed high self-efficacy, it still acknowledged the contrast in teacher participants. Teachers with high self-efficacy were more engaged. Teachers with low self-efficacy attributed it to resource scarcity (Narkun & Smogorzewska, 2019, p. 113).

The final belief, racism, systematically oppresses "a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another" (Racism, n.d., para. 1). These circumstances essentially strain confidence and productivity. The findings of two dissertation studies on racial disparities confirmed self-efficacy struggles (Wells, 2016, p. ii). One stated that, while racism lowered self-efficacy, it was "not clear whether the relationship between racial discrimination and self-efficacy is stronger or weaker depending on an individual's race, gender, or levels of resilience" (Wells, 2016, p. 73). Another race/efficacy study produced contradicting results, exposing that "female participants had overall high leadership self-efficacy and leadership aspiration scores" (Richards, 2017, p. vi). African American women scored the same or higher than White American women (Richards, 2017, p. 115). Despite the results, the researcher maintained her perception on racial disparities, stating that "the African American female leader faces both gender and racial discrimination in America. The belief in their ability

to perform as a leader despite unwarranted injustices requires an unprecedented source of psychological strength" (Richards, 2017, p. 134). She emphasized the importance of not underestimating ethnicity in one's experience (Richards, 2017, p. 115).

A Gloria and Hird (1999) study, indicated that "ethnic identity and group orientation were significant predictors of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy scale" (CDSE), favoring racial minorities as opposed to White Americans (Richards, 2017, p. 65). The nasty truths about racial inequality dominate the past, present, and future. This well-known fact partially credited the researcher's perception. Nonetheless, additional research is required to dig deeper into the current efficacy effects of racial injustice. Based on the researcher's post-survey beliefs, additional research on self-efficacy and perception may be beneficial as well.

Within the confines of self-concept, people perceive themselves and how they believe they fit into the world around them. Like self-efficacy, self-concept can fall anywhere on the ordinal scale—either weak to strong or low to high (Self Concept, n.d., paras. 1-2). Self-concept is not inherent; it grows through influence (Self Concept, n.d., paras. 7-8). Life experiences and social interactions shape self-concept. It can be impressionable, indicating that fresh experiences and awareness can stimulate change (Self Concept, n.d., para. 11). It can also be multi-dimensional, meaning that one person can have separate personal wellness self-concepts (physically, emotionally, and socially) (Self Concept, n.d., para. 10).

Self-efficacy cultivation bears a striking resemblance to personal wellness optimization. Health and Wellness Educators (HAWEs) stated that, to maximize personal wellness, a person must develop five areas: physical, emotional, social, spiritual,

and intellectual (Dimensions of Wellness, n.d., para. 1). An *Education* journal article referenced the physical side of self-efficacy. An investigation of university athletes and self-efficacy found that, while task orientation positively contributed to general self-efficacy, ego orientation did not (Sari, 2015, p. 176). Previous research contradicted this discovery, asserting that exercisers exhibited high levels of self-efficacy regardless of their ego orientation (Sari, 2015, p. 175). The incongruence suggested that further research is necessary to evaluate the individual—not the goal orientation. The researcher suspects that her dissertation study results will offer more insight on this topic.

After approaching self-efficacy from a social standpoint, a *Journal of Counseling & Development* article found that stress elevates problem-solving, "social support seeking, resilience and self-efficacy" (Li et al., 2018, pp. 138-139). Other research on game difficulty and self-efficacy shared the same sentiments—stress equaled higher self-efficacy. Despite difficult games generating anxiety, self-efficacy still improved (Power et al., 2019, p. 292). Difficulty increased engagement and performance which, in effect, influenced "mastery experiences, the predominant source of self-efficacy" (Power et al., 2019, p. 290).

The intellectual aspect of personal wellness covers "intelligence and analytical thinking" professionally and personally (What is Intellectual?, 2008, para. 1). A compelling amount of research explored links between self-efficacy and livelihood. In summation, the findings proved that:

1. An experiment containing 315 Korean participants revealed that proactive personalities strengthen self-efficacy in career decision-making (Kim & Park, 2017, p. 179).

2. An analysis of 176 Turkish principals disclosed that transformational leadership traits promote self-efficacy (Gulmez, & Negis Isik, 2020, p. 334).

3. Research involving a group of Missouri Western State University business students indicated that people with high self-efficacy are more likely to explore entrepreneurial career paths (McLaughlin, 2019, p. 75).

4. A study containing a population of Korean undergraduate and graduate students unveiled that daily positive affect mediates daily career decision self-efficacy (Park et al., 2019, pp. 320-321).

5. Research including a set of Latina/o college students showed that people with high self-efficacy perceive fewer barriers in achieving their career goals (Mejia, & Gushue, 2017, p. 151).

Two studies delved into emotion and self-efficacy partnerships. The results of an *International Journal of Special Education* article revealed that "individuals with a physical disability had a lower level of resilience self-efficacy compared to those without a disability" (Samsari, & Soulis, 2019, p. 943). Resilience self-efficacy concerns a person's ability to bounce back after unpleasant circumstances (Samsari, & Soulis, 2019, p. 939). Based on the definition, resilience self-efficacy looks a lot like emotional resilience. The study also uncovered a variance in problem-solving self-efficacy (Samsari, & Soulis, 2019, p. 947). Problem-solving self-efficacy refers to a person's capacity to "efficiently manage and resolve a difficult situation or a serious problem" (Samsari, & Soulis, 2019, p. 939). This description mimics emotional problem-solving.

The results of a Turkish university study "revealed that both knowledge giving and receiving behaviors were best predicted by knowledge sharing self-efficacy,

followed by motivations and sense of community" (Ergün & Avci, 2018, p. 60). This finding aligned with a Bock and Kim (2002) study which identified internal motivation as a knowledge sharing necessity and a Yilmaz (2016) study which illuminated a direct correlation between self-efficacy, motivation, and "knowledge sharing behaviors (knowledge receiving and knowledge giving)" (Ergün & Avci, 2018, pp. 60-68). Many psychologists link motivation and emotion. First and foremost, motivation drives emotion. Subsequently, both activate behavior (Sincero, 2012, para. 7).

Personal Development Areas

Although wellness is profoundly subjective, many people defined it with concrete terms and cookie-cutter classifications. Some proclaimed that wellness is not just surviving—they view it as thriving (What is Wellness?, n.d., para. 1). Some have defined it as "being in good physical and mental health"—elaborating that one cannot exist without the other. Improving one benefits the other; they govern each other (Swarbrick, 2008, para. 1). They described it as "an integration of continued growth and balance" (Seven Dimensions of Wellness, n.d., paras. 1-2), having "personal harmony" (Stoewen, 2017, p. 861) and the key to "living life fully" (Stoewen, 2017, p. 861). They called it multidimensional (Seven Dimensions of Wellness, n.d., paras. 1-2), interdependent (Stoewen, 2017, p. 861), aspectual (Why 8 Aspects of Wellness, n.d., para. 1), domanial growth (Thibodeaux, 2019, para. 1) and the holistic approach (Kapur, n.d., para. 3). Some simply regarded it as personal development areas (Rohn, 2016, para. 10).

However, after browsing interminable websites brimming with wellness identifiers and colloquialisms, the researcher found only one scholarly interpretation.

Years magnified sixty-fold could not diminish, American psychologist, Maslow's

(Cherry, 2020b, para. 1) Hierarchy of Needs. His theory of human motivation continues

to be "popular and influential" (Acevedo, 2018, p. 741). Maslow founded self-

actualization and "defined this tendency as the full use and exploitation of talents,

capacities, potentialities, etc.;" however, self-actualization was not the wellness cap—it

continues infinitely, striving for new ceilings and personal achievements (Cherry, 2020b,

paras. 9-10). He acknowledged the diversity of people—their life progression and innate

needs (Acevedo, 2018, p. 744). His hierarchy illustrated a five-tier triangular progression

of lower- and higher-level requirements. In ranking order, the lower-level basic needs

promoted physiology (food, water, warmth, and/or rest) and safety (security). The

higher-level psychological needs fostered belonging/love (relationships) and esteem

(prestige and/or accomplishment). After achieving lower- and higher-level needs, a

person arrived at the peak level, self-actualization (reaching their full potential) (McLeod,

2020, paras. 1-3).

     Maslow acknowledged the limitations within his theory, admitting that his studies

were generalized and instinctive. Despite his human needs triangulation, he still

embraced their intricacies. In his *Journal of Business Ethics* evaluation of Maslow's

need theory, Acevedo (2018) elaborated that "the human being is neither a sum of genetic

material nor some abstract construct of autonomous ego, but a rational human person

steeped in value-rich extra-natural and natural realities—religious, ethical, aesthetical,

intellectual, social, and cultural" (p. 753). This breakdown of stipulations plainly

communicated personal development areas. Since then, several non-scholarly sources

have concocted their own personal development area breakdowns.

After analyzing 10 online sources, the researcher recognized parallels, slight variances, and oddities between personal development areas. Every source agreed upon two areas: physical (body) and spiritual (Rohn, 2016, paras. 10-11; Alrash, 2019, para. 2; Why 8 Aspects of Wellness, n.d., para. 1; Thibodeaux, 2019, para. 1; 5 Main Areas of Personal Development What Are They, 2020, paras. 3-7; Kapur, n.d., para. 1; Seven Dimensions of Wellness at UW-Stevens Point: SPECIES, n.d., para. 1; Dimensions of Wellness, n.d., para. 1; Stoewen, 2017, p. 861; Swarbrick, 2008, paras. 10-12). The majority endorsed the emotional (90%) and social (80%) areas (Alrash, 2019, para. 2; Why 8 Aspects of Wellness, n.d., para. 1; Thibodeaux, 2019, para. 1; 5 Main Areas of Personal Development What Are They, 2020, paras. 5-6; Kapur, n.d., para. 1; Seven Dimensions of Wellness at UW-Stevens Point: SPECIES, n.d., para. 1; Dimensions of Wellness, n.d., para. 1; Stoewen, 2017, p. 861; Swarbrick, 2008, paras. 4-11). Only a few sources considered environmental (40%), intellectual (40%), mental (mind) (40%), career (40%), and financial (30%) areas (Why 8 Aspects of Wellness, n.d., para. 1; Rohn, 2016, para. 15; Alrash, 2019, para. 2; 5 Main Areas of Personal Development What Are They, 2020, para. 5; Seven Dimensions of Wellness at UW-Stevens Point: SPECIES, n.d., para. 1; Dimensions of Wellness, n.d., para. 1; Stoewen, 2017, p. 861; Swarbrick, 2008, paras. 5-9). Singularities existed in the educational, cerebral, and community areas (Why 8 Aspects of Wellness, n.d., para. 1; Thibodeaux, 2019, para. 1; Kapur, n.d., para. 1). Drawing from this data, the researcher crafted the personal development areas in her *Self-Directed Goal Theory*.

Four of the 10 online sources were based in academics: one K-12 education (Kapur, n.d.) and three postsecondary education (Swarbrick, 2008; Stoewen, 2017; Seven

Dimensions of Wellness at UW-Stevens Point: SPECIES, n.d.). This finding spoke

volumes about the congruences between education and personal development. The K-12

source referred to a Bhutan residential school's Royal Academy, holistic approach,

spotlighted in October 2020 World Education Week. They integrated personal

development areas with their academic curriculum. They hoped that their approach

"inspired learners and equipped them with the skills and processes that would help them

navigate new content and challenges that the future might present" (Kapur, n.d., paras. 3-

4). In other words, they inspired lifelong learning, "self-initiated education that is

focused on personal development"—which can be achieved through goal setting

(Lifelong Learning, 2019, paras. 1-3).

Goal-Setting

Picasso said it best; "goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in

which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no

other route to success" (Houston, 2020, para. 5). Picasso was a notable innovator who

crafted 13,500 paintings, 100,000 prints and engravings, and 34,000 illustrations. As an

artistic visionary who contributed to diverse art movements and styles, it can be surmised

that Picasso practiced what he preached (Pablo Picasso and his paintings, n.d., para. 21).

Goal setting was undeniably his fruitful muse. Whether artistically, academically, or

personally, goal setting translates to a having a clear vision and following the necessary

steps toward success. Within the adult learning sector, learners follow the same process.

They

> move through a series of steps that have to do with first deciding what to learn,
>
> what resources they need, where to learn, and how to maintain the motivation for

learning. The steps involve setting goals and timetables, determining the pace,

and assessing the current level of knowledge and skills. (Merriam & Bierema,

2014, p. 63)

Within the self-help sphere, self-directed learning is linked to personal goal-

setting. The results of a *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy* experiment revealed a

vital self-help component, explicit learning goals (McLean, 2013, p. 381). Another

Educational Philosophy & Theory article advised that,

learning emerges as a main notion within the discourses of self-help and it works

as a bridge of articulation between them and the formal educational discourses. In

both cases, the learning focuses the action on an individual who acts upon himself

through intellectual and emotional training exercises which allows him to

permanently transform. (Marín-Díaz, 2017, p. 714)

However, because of the structure necessary for goal attainment, self-help aligned more

with Pedagogy than Andragogy. This assertion divorced self-directed learning from adult

education, suggesting that, although self-directed learning can occur at any age, structure

is obstinate (Marín-Díaz, 2017, p. 710).

The finding of an *Adult Education Quarterly* study echoed the importance of

structure. When discussing obvious criticism, McLean (2013) mentioned that "cognitive

dissonance theories in psychology would predict that once people invest time and

resources in doing something, they naturally wish to believe that what they did was

worthwhile" (p. 383) However, the research design failed to evaluate "thoughts and

actions representing real change" (p. 383) Because of this, self-help readers dismissed

self-direction and questioned the lesson's effectiveness (McLean, 2013).

"Self-development and self-improvement can be obtained in several ways but setting goals for personal growth increase the likelihood of success" (Lindberg, 2020, para. 1). However, success is not the only thing to look forward to. From an educational point-of-view, goal setting enriches motivation, self-esteem, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. It fosters traits of a lifelong learner (McGlynn & Kelly, 2017, pp. 22-23). However, since goal setting can be approached from dualistic thought process, some people may not reap its benefits. Unethical behavior "that violates moral codes about what is right and wrong when judged in terms of justice, law, or other societal guidelines" (Niven & Healy, 2016, p. 116). Although most people claim to possess high moral standards, studies have shown that "internal or external moral codes" were fine-tuned to benefit the individual—more egocentric than altruistic (p. 116).

A *Journal of Business Ethics* article provided two examples of unethical behaviors in goal setting. One behavior involved following corrupt paths to success and the other involved falsely reporting goal success. Unfortunately, regarding this dissertation study (and any other bodies of goal-setting research), this will always be a blind spot. Ethically, researchers answer to the IRB Board, but participants answer to themselves. Researchers can only report on what participants disclose and cannot ethically determine their moral compass. Another counter-productive behavior was narrowly focusing on goal attainment "while ignoring the other important aspects of the task" (Niven & Healy, 2016, p. 116).

Goal setting possesses a certain philosophical je ne sais quoi. In a New York University essay, Moss (2011) explained that

virtue makes the goal right; phronesis is responsible only for what contributes to

the goal. That is, practical intellect does not tell us what ends to pursue, but only

how to pursue them; our ends themselves are set by our ethical characters. (p. 1)

The book, *Self, Motivation and Virtue*, further intertwined goal setting and virtues. A

McAdams and Pals (2006) citation defined characteristic adaptation as: "a wide range of

motivational, social-cognitive, and developmental adaptations, contextualized in time,

place, and/or social role" (p. 208). Fitting with this broad definition, they provided a long

list of psychological constructs that are captured by this level, including goals, plans, self-

images, and developmental tasks, all while noting that there is no agreed-upon taxonomy

of characteristic adaptations akin to the hierarchical model of traits. Another DeYoung

(2015) citation

provided a simplified definition of characteristic adaptations, asserting that this

aspect of personality can be decomposed into just three broad categories, goals

that guide behavior, interpretations of self and world, and cognitive and

behavioral strategies used to pursue goals, attempting to transform the state of

existence as currently perceived into the one desired. (Snow & Narvaez, 2019, p.

15)

In short, like virtue cultivation, the path to setting goals depends on the person, their

experiences, and their truths.

Introspection allows people to reflect on their truths, make enhancements, and

create a better version of themselves. Conversely, the outcome can help or hurt.

Perceptions that visibly contribute to well-being can inspire and venerate. On the other

hand, it can "lead to a ricochet effect on other behaviors linked to performance and

efficacy" (Tocino-Smith, 2021, paras. 113-117). Statistically, 83% of the United States population do not set goals. Out of the 17% that do set goals, 90% achieve their goals. People increase their goal success rate by 90% simply by setting goals. Results from the first goal-setting study uncovered that the chances of someone achieving their goals when writing them down increases by 50%. Ninety-two percent of New Year resolutions fail in two weeks.

The average person experiences 1,500 goal-negating thoughts per minute and, if they do not establish accountability partners, those thoughts shift actions (Tocino-Smith, 2021, para. 25). Statistics have shown that reading self-help books or motivational quotes is not enough; goal setting requires "essential ingredients" (Tocino-Smith, 2021, paras. 13-20). Based on Locke's 1990 *Goal-Setting Theory*, goal setting is not only mandatory, but it also breeds "self-confidence, autonomy, and happiness" (Tocino-Smith, 2021, paras. 21-23). However, goals condemn fortuity; they must be meaningful, offer guidance, and have purpose (as cited in Tocino-Smith, 2021, paras. 21-23). "The theory further suggested that specific goals ought to be challenging in order to stimulate maximum performance" (Niven & Healy, 2016, p. 116). Every ingredient drives the learner's overall performance (Niven & Healy, 2016, p. 116).

Performance "sheds light on how self-esteem, individual perception, and the value system of individuals come into play" (Tocino-Smith, 2021, para. 25). Vroom's *Expectancy Theory* focused solely on cogitation. It added an extra layer to Locke's *Goal-Setting Theory* by examining the "what" and "why" of goal attainment. It measured motivational force by a person's expectancy, instrumentality, and valence (as cited in Tocino-Smith, 2021, paras. 15-21). Expectancy described the individual belief in

reaching the goal. Instrumentality served as the reward for goal achievement. Valence represented the value placed on the individual reward. Decisions made in all three elements can make or break goal achievement (Bhattacharya, 2016, paras. 3-5). Although the theory exposed intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, it did not solve motivational problems (Bhattacharya, 2016, para. 13).

Several motivation theories ventured to define individual motivation. Yet, no known goal theories aimed to shift motivational behavior. The researcher's original *Self-Directed Goal Theory* utilized intention, balance, precision, virtue, incentive, and repetition to adjust motivational behavior. Over the years, the *Achievement Goal Theory* has been refined into a "hierarchical model, integrating a variety of achievement motivations" (Achievement Goal Theory, n.d., para. 1). The changes incorporated goal achievement models and goal consequence theories. The key constructs evaluated goal involvement, goal orientation, and goal climates (Achievement Goal Theory, n.d., para .2). Goals were viewed as task-oriented (mastery/intrinsic) or ego-oriented (performance/extrinsic) (Achievement Goal Theory, n.d., para. 7). Scholars later identified that, despite competence, performance goals were either approach-oriented or avoidance-oriented (Achievement Goal Theory, n.d., para. 12). Additional research factored competence back into the hierarchical model, considering that competence levels can be perceived or absolute (Achievement Goal Theory, n.d., para. 13).

Studies have shown that "there is no way to know whether a failed performance is due to a bad task or lack of competence." Some psychologists even believe that "the distinction between competence and performance is unnecessary" (Geller, 2019, paras. 3-5). They view life as a performance; therefore, the emphasis should be less on assessing

competence and more on improving performance (Geller, 2019, paras. 3-5). Akin to

psychological opinion, goal setting depends on performance for goal attainment. Goal

setting consists of three goal types: process, outcome, and performance goals. Process

goals signify the actions people take to achieve their goal. Outcome goals represent the

controlled or uncontrolled result. Performance goals represent perception and

controllable behavior (Goal-Setting, n.d., paras. 2-3).

Placing an emphasis on motivation as the goal success driver, a *Journal of Higher

Education Theory & Practice* article reported that performance-based goals were not as

effective as mastery (action-based) goals (Roy & Saha, 2019, p. 153). Additional

research determined that, because mastery goals could not be meaningfully measured,

they could not be considered goals at all. There was no proof that the action taken

produced the desired result. On the other hand, performance goals are quantifiable, agile,

engaging, and deliberate (Barr, 2017, paras. 4-7). Contrarily, "performance goals have a

more mixed profile being associated with both positive and negative outcomes" (King et

at., 2017, pp. 620-621).   For example, within academia, the positive outcome signified

goal achievement and the negative outcome embodied anxiety.   The negative aspect may

have been due to students' struggle with distinguishing the difference between

avoidance-oriented or approach-oriented performance goals (King et al., 2017, pp. 620-

621). People strive for avoidance-oriented goals to negatively keep up appearances to

themselves and others. They aim for approach-oriented goals to positively impact

themselves and others (Goal Orientation Theory: How Goals Affect Student Motivation

& Behavior, 2012, paras. 8-9). The results of a *Journal of Classroom Interaction* study

exposed that social concern goals boosted self-regulated learning in Namibian primary school students (Goagoses et al., 2020).

> Since social concern goals "represent the desire to achieve well in school to assist other students with their academic development, they were considered approach-oriented goals." However, social goals reach far beyond social service; other academic social goals encouraged elevated school/career status (social status goals), building relationships (social affiliation goals), and gaining praise (social approval goals). (p. 69)

These additional academic social goals straddled the fence between approach-oriented and avoidance-oriented. However, the Namibian study demographic, Africa, only accounted for a specific population and culture. Educational psychologists believed "that the effects of goals on learning outcomes are culturally invariant" (King et al, 2017, p. 620). Other research revealed notable differences—potentially impacting academic goal orientation. However, one question renders culture or goal inconsequential—how important is the goal to the goal-seeker? An excerpt from the *Self, Motivation and Virtue* book spoke to person interest in goal setting:

> Personal projects are "extended sets of personality salient action in context". They are extended in that they take some time (days, weeks, even years) to carry out. They involve some goal that is personally salient—that is, reasonably important to the individual—along with its various subgoals, the strategies that are used to achieve those goals, and the interpretations of the relevant aspects of self and world that allow people both to define the context in which the goals are pursued and to judge when the goals have been met. Researchers who defend

different theories of well-being will differ over whether success in personal

projects is intrinsically good or good because it leads to something else (such as

pleasure) and whether the success in personal projects must be subjectively or

objectively desirable, but few would deny that the fulfillment of at least some

valued personal projects is a significant aspect of well-being. (Snow & Narvaez,

2019, p. 20)

Many researchers explored whether goal source affects individual goal

importance. For example, a *Journal of Experimental Education* study looked at students'

self-set goals, commitment, effort, and performance. They discovered that, if they

assigned implementation intentions to their self-set goals, their performance improved.

Implementation intentions described the "when, where, and how" toward goal planning

(Seo et al., 2018, p. 386). This sort of implementation simulates coaching. Whitmore

(2003) referred "to coaching as unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own

performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them" (p. 8). It focuses on

the learner—their "goals, thinking, feeling, actions, effectiveness, and satisfaction" (Cox,

2015, p. 28). Implementation intentions and coaching emulates the schematic design in

the researcher's original *Self-Directed Goal Theory*—self-set goals with guided

execution.

The results of the *Journal of Experimental Education* study contradicted previous

research which reported on self-set goal failures and assigned goal successes (Seo et al.,

2018, p. 386). Ironically, previous findings have an andragogical and pedagogical

semblance. Previous findings were reported in 1988, 1997, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007,

2011, 2012, and 2014. The dated studies indicated that self-set goals were unsuccessful,

unstructured, defeating, burdening, distracting, and energy-depleting. The more recent

studies (2012 and 2014) only favored assigned goals for three reasons: lack of

knowledge, task duration, and social pressure (Seo et al., 2018, pp. 387-388). Given that

the *Journal of Experimental Education* study took place in 2018, it may be beneficial to

investigate pedagogical/andragogical influences and time periods within each study's

population.

Goal attainment not only depends on goal source; goal framing, characteristics,

complexity, ranking, and timeframe must also be considered. Goal framing breaks goals

down into three elements: "normative, hedonic, and gain." With normative, the individual

takes others into consideration. Hedonistic satisfies the current self. Gain seeks to

improve resources (comparable to social status goals) (Using Goal Framing to Improve

Performance, 2011, para. 2). Goal characteristics represent each piece of the goal

puzzle—how many simultaneous goals are there (4 Characteristics of a Powerful Goal-

Setting Process, n.d., para. 5), how SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic,

and timely) are they (McGlynn & Kelly, 2017, p. 22), how will they be monitored, and

are they modifiable (4 Characteristics of a Powerful Goal-Setting Process, n.d., paras. 7-

9). Studies have shown that being overwhelmed with too many goals is as effective as

not having goals at all (McCarther, 2018, p. 445) Additional literature also discussed

overambitious (unrealistic) goals. Simulating the role of protagonist and antagonist,

unrealistic goals can work toward or against goal attainment (Brown, 2021, para. 24). On

one hand, when utilized in a public health setting, it can educate and motivate the masses.

On the other hand, to the goal-setter, it can produce the same optimism as someone

preparing for a time-critical event while flat-ironing one strand of hair at a time (Eval &

Sjöstrand, 2020, pp. 480-482). When it comes to goal complexity, "the goal will vary depending on the task and the skill level of the person completing the task." Regardless of the initial goal complexity, the challenge should intensify as the skill grows (McCarther, 2018, p. 445). Only then, will performance improve (Ramnerö & Törneke, 2015, p. 95). Goal ranking is also factored into goal setting. Goal ranking can follow several methods such as completing the most important goal first or the goal that takes the least time (Rank Goals in Order of Importance, 2021, para. 1).

Calculating a goal's timeframe parrots a stanza from a popular Robert Frost poem, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference" (The Road Not Taken, n.d., para. 4). Setting realistic and potent goal timeframes really does set the stage for goal success or failure. First and foremost, the personal development area must be considered; this determines whether the goal's intention is to learn a new skill, achieve a particular outcome, reach a specific goal, or change a habit. For instance, for a person who previously studied a foreign language in high school, "it may only take 700 hours to master that language" (Setting Realistic Timeframes for Goals, 2007, paras. 13-16). Alternatively, "a person with low linguistic intelligence may take up to 1500 hours to get the hang of the basic language" (Setting Realistic Timeframes for Goals, 2007, paras. 13-16). Mastering a new skill requires 1000 hours (at minimum) of active practice and development. Depending on the goal, a particular outcome may take months or years to achieve. Because of this, mini goals (with small milestones) are encouraged to build up to the desired outcome (Setting Realistic Timeframes for Goals, 2007, paras. 13-16). For example, the researcher created a short-term career goal (2 months) to receive a promotion. Unfortunately, despite a

successful interview, a skill/leadership assessment revealed that additional development was necessary to flourish in her new role. Unexpectedly, her two-month goal shifted to one year. Each month, she worked on development areas listed in the assessment results and reported her growth (mini goals with small milestones). One year later, she received her promotion.

Specific goals, such as weight loss or fitness have certain healthy parameters. A healthy weight loss target is about two-to-three pounds per week—and even this amount can fluctuate from week-to-week (Setting Realistic Timeframes for Goals, 2007, para. 18). Therefore, both the total weight loss goal and healthy target must be taken into consideration when determining the goal timeframe. "Regardless of how fit you are, you can achieve peak fitness in about three months" (Setting Realistic Timeframes for Goals, 2007, para. 19). However, peak fitness and a person's ideal fitness goals are relative.

Depending on the goal, making (or breaking) a habit may be a short-term or long-term commitment. "A habit is a behavior that is recurrent, is cued by specific context, often happens without much awareness or conscious intent, and is acquired through frequent repetition" (Stoewen, 2017, p. 862). It etches itself into the brain's neural coding, automatically reacting when triggered. Studies show that about 40% of everyday behavior is repeated in the form of habits. Given their encoding and significant presence, habits cannot be erased, only replaced with new ones (Stoewen, 2017, p. 862).

Without even recalling the theory's origin, throngs of people undoubtedly know about the three weeks to form (or break) a habit rule. Yet, many may not know the two-truths-and-a-lie characteristics of the rule. If done consistently, some habits can be developed in three-to-six weeks. On the flip side, if adamantly avoided for three-six

weeks, some bad habits can be broken (Setting Realistic Timeframes for Goals, 2007, paras. 6-7). However, bad habits such as drug or alcohol addictions require more time and effort to beat; this is where the lie comes into play (Setting Realistic Timeframes for Goals, 2007, para. 10). In 1960, Maltz published his book, *Psycho-Cybernetics*, establishing the three weeks to form (or break) a habit rule. He based his theory on personal reflection and patient examination. Despite his situational observation, his book sold 30 million copies, transforming his speculation to fact (Frothingham, 2019, paras. 8-11). On the contrary, new habits "can take anywhere from 18 to 254 days for a person to form a new habit and an average of 66 days for a new behavior to become automatic" (Frothingham, 2019, paras. 1-2). Therein lies the necessity for short-term and long-term goals.

Short-term goals involve a person's immediate future (today, next week, by the end of the month, or year-end) (Long-Term and Short-Term Goals, 2021, para. 2); whereas long-term goals involve the distant future (greater than 12 months). Short-term goals "establish flow conditions, focus the mind and give immediate feedback" (Long-Term and Short-Term Goals, 2021, para. 3). Creating short-term goals (or breaking larger goals into short-term mini goals) are recommended because they focus on the present moment (McCarther, 2018, p. 445). "Long-term goals require time and planning" (Long-Term and Short-Term Goals, 2021, para. 3).

Goal setting commands a sense of optimism. "Research shows that tempering a sunny disposition with a small dose of realism, or even pessimism, might be the best way to build resilience and achieve one's goals" (What is Optimism?, n.d., para. 6). People with this temperament tend to "adopt more challenging goals, try harder to achieve them,

persist despite setbacks and develop coping mechanisms for managing their emotional states" (Sari, 2015, p. 171). Goal setting also requires tailored conduct, also known as goal-directed behavior. "Goal-directed behavior is proactive, not reactive" (Ramnerö & Törneke, 2015, p. 91). It curtails behavior via stimulus and reward. One goal-directed behavior, goal statements, guides behavior by offering a potentially undesirable function as the stimulus and a foreseeable negative consequence as the reward.

For example, a verbal goal statement might be "I always misplace my car keys because I never hang them on the key rack. Once I find them, I will hang them on the key rack going forward." The stimulus would be continuously misplacing the keys. The reward would be hanging them on the key rack, preventing the consequence of future loss. Simply stated, goal-directed behavior offers intrinsic incentive toward goal achievement (Ramnerö & Törneke, 2015, p. 92). A *Journal of Higher Education Theory & Practice* study examined the effects of goal-directed behavior on college-level student performance. In the first experiment, the researcher used performance-based goals to determine if students could achieve a target test score. In the second experiment, task-based goals were utilized to verify if students could reach a target overall course grade. The task-based goals modified students' behavior by requiring more effort (Roy & Saha, 2019, pp. 156-157).

While navigating a goal-setting plan, "priorities and preferences may change" (123 Success, 2020, paras. 1-2). The plan lays the foundation. The goals serve as rough framing. Continuous reflection offers mental light bulbs during the goal journey. Creating a malleable goal makes room for fixtures—honoring self and nurturing goal fulfillment (123 Success, 2020, paras. 1-2).

Self-Monitoring

"Without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more unintended consequences and failing to achieve anything successful" (The Best Self-Reflection Quotes on Life, Love and Work, 2019, para. 7). This presents itself in the form of subconscious, sedentary behavior (Compernolle et al., 2019, para. 1). Accordingly, self-monitoring interventions are crucial to shift the goal paradigm. Self-monitoring "disrupts habits to change circumstances so that habit cueing does not occur anymore" (Compernolle et al., 2019, paras. 6-7). For instance, some studies have used pedometers as self-monitoring examples—electronically displaying steps taken or the lack thereof (Compernolle et al., 2019, paras. 6-7).

Self-monitoring acts in accordance with self-directed learning. In the *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice* book, Merriam and Bierema (2014), "suggested that self-directed learning was affected by self-management, self-monitoring of the knowledge construction process, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation" (p. 68). The researcher's blended definition of self-monitoring interpreted it as a "multi-step, meta-cognitive strategy" (Vogelgesang et al., 2016, p. 479) that "requires the possession of multiple skill sets, such as self-assessment, goal setting, and self-instruction" (Ennis et al., 2018, p. 177) to monitor/record performance and/or behavior (Chapter 7: Self-Monitoring, 2017, p. 278). Self-monitoring is an "evidence-based strategy" (Hager, 2018, p. 284) often associated with self-awareness (Ghanizadeh, 2017, p. 102) and "reflective practice and critical thinking" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 69). Proposed in 1974, the self-monitoring concept considered that self-examination levels vary depending on the person and situation. Exceptionally reflective people pay attention to and guide

their behavior. Non-reflective people primarily base their behavior on emotion (Özalp Türetgen et al., 2017, p. 296).

Although it originated within primary school settings (Vogelgesang et al., 2016, p. 479), the self-monitoring concept embraced a multiplicity of settings (Lively et al., 2019, p. 37). Studies found that, when used, it benefits students of any age—with any ability or disability (Chapter 7: Self-Monitoring, 2017, p. 278). Three studies introduced self-monitoring to students with cerebral palsy (CP), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and behavioral challenges. CP study findings revealed, through self-monitoring, students with math difficulties improved math accuracy during independent work (Sheehey et al., 2017, p. 217). ADHD results showed that "on-task behavior and academic outcomes improved" (Areej, 2017, p. 118). By introducing a self-monitoring intervention, the behavioral concern study demonstrated an "increase in on-task behavior," while being supervised and acting autonomously (Lively et al., 2019, p. 46). A separate Iranian study that evaluated higher education students revealed that self-monitoring produced "higher-order thinking skills such as reflective thinking and critical thinking" (Ghanizadeh, 2017, p. 101). Self-monitoring aids in behavioral or academic skill improvements. Generally, "it has been paired with class meetings where students are part of the problem-solving process to improve behavior in the classroom" (Chapter 7: Self-Monitoring, 2017, p. 278). But elementally, self-monitoring can adjust any individual or group behavior so settings outside the classroom should not be ruled out (Ennis et al., p. 177; Chapter 7: Self-Monitoring, 2017, p. 279).

Self-monitoring enhances the provision (Hager, 2018, p. 284) and receipt of instruction. Studies have successfully proven that it develops "academic and behavioral

skills" (Chapter 7: Self-Monitoring, 2017, p. 278). It allows learners to observe their

actions or behavior, forcing them to self-correct (Vogelgesang et al., 2016, p. 479). It can

be conducted independently—without observation (Hager, 2018, p. 284). Through self-

monitoring, learners can spot their trends and patterns (Chapter 7: Self-Monitoring, 2017,

p. 278). When used in goal setting, it diagnoses overambitious goals, prompting

necessary revisions (Ghanizadeh, 2017, p. 111). In this study, the researcher used an

original self-monitoring checklist as a data collection method. In one page, the checklist

covered nine days and 19 behaviors/emotions. The goal of the one-page structure was to

easily spot repetitive behaviors/patterns or any other goal barriers.

     Self-monitoring strategies manifest efficacy by addressing "academic abilities,

self-help skills, behavioral problems and social behaviors" (Vogelgesang et al., 2016, p.

479). Because of this, different targets require different approaches. First and foremost,

self-monitoring can be written or digital (Vogelgesang et al., 2016, p. 479). It can also

be task-based or time-based. Reminiscent of the researcher's method, task-based self-

monitoring utilizes checklists. Time-based self-monitoring simply "records an

occurrence or behavior" (Ennis et al., 2018, p. 177). Undeterred by the type, self-

monitoring follows a regulated two-phase process: assessing the needed (or needless)

occurrence/behavior and monitoring it for potential change (Ennis et al., 2018, p. 176).

Fundamentally, self-monitoring predominates self-management—and "self-management

paves the way for goal setting (creating/breaking a behavior), self-instruction (affirming

self to direct behavior), self-evaluation (weighing behavior against target behavior), and

strategy instruction (following steps to complete tasks autonomously)" (Chapter 7: Self-

Monitoring, 2017, p. 278).

Painting the self-monitoring picture looks a lot like the big and little picture of change management. The big picture considers the stakeholders, concept, and objectives. The little picture acknowledges those effected and how the change positively affects them (Goman, 2019, para. 3). When introducing the enduring qualities of the self-monitoring, the first consideration is time— "it takes two seconds to institute a self-monitoring process" (Ennis et al., 2018, p. 186). Scholastically, it breeds "work completion, academic engagement," drive (Vogelgesang et al., 2016, p. 479), better grades, and behavior management (Lively et al., 2019, p. 48). Professionally, self-monitoring revs socialization (Lively et al., 2019, p. 48), charm, awareness, and sensitivity (Özalp Türetgen et al., 2017, p. 296). In taking the bitter with the sweet, the dark side of self-monitoring cannot be disregarded. Leadership professionals who over-achieve through self-monitoring may behave opportunistically and lack integrity (Özalp Türetgen et al., 2017, p. 304).

Copious research adjoined self-monitoring with self-regulation—and rightfully so. Through self-regulation, a person "adjusts their behavior to achieve a desired result" (Steffens, 2015, p. 49). Four studies mentioned self-regulation during self-monitoring reflection. A juvenile justice facility study stated that "one efficient behavioral intervention with the potential to improve students' self-regulation is self-monitoring" (Lively et al., 2019, p. 37). A higher education study acknowledged "self-monitoring as a subscale of self-regulation" (Ghanizadeh, 2017, p. 106). The Missouri School-Wide Positive Behavior Support website described self-monitoring as "the acquisition of self-regulation, which is the crossover skill between academics and behavior" (Chapter 7:

Self-Monitoring, 2017, p. 278). Self-monitoring and self-regulation run parallel with self and adjacent with development.

Self-Regulation

Self-monitoring and control postures as the nucleus of a person's self-regulatory processes (Kelley & Salisbury-Glennon, 2016, p. 89). Self-regulation can be inherent, autodidactic, or learned from others through "modeling, emulating, and monitoring" (Acosta & Hall, 2018, p. 42). However, since practice relies on scarce cognitive resources, external cognition may be inevitable (Vohs & Baumeister, 2016, p. 575). Self-regulated learners drive their own development initiatives by seeking external feedback. Then, they mindfully develop strategies that enhance productivity and propel them toward goal success.

In his *European Journal of Education* article, Steffens (2015) talked about lifelong learning competences. His Zimmerman et al. (2000) citation expressed that "self-regulation involves 'cognitive, affective, motivation, and behavioral components that provide the individual with the capacity to adjust his or her actions and goals to achieve the desired results in light of changing environmental conditions" (p. 49). Over the years, scholars have investigated various self-regulation characteristics. Psychology scholars placed their self-regulation research methods into three buckets: the whole self-regulation trait, trait elements, and general behavior (Booth et al., 2018, p. 3769). Their research revealed that genes, society, and environment shape self-regulation (Booth et al., 2018, p. 3770). Self-regulation may be inherited, activated from "infancy to young adulthood" and supplemented by "caretakers, teachers, and mentors" (Acosta & Hall, 2018, p. 42). Economists interpreted self-regulation a bit differently than other fields.

Although they acknowledged its behavioral and cognitive aspects, they ultimately believed that self-regulation was a "decision-making process." They focused on "choice patterns and how individual preferences changed over time and in response to perceived benefits" (Booth et al., 2018, p. 3771).

If self-regulation is not characteristic or self-taught, the economic argument may be sound; people will need to decide and take action to develop their self-regulation. The results of an *Innovative Higher Education* study stressed self-regulation's necessity for decision-making, activation, and action. When researching the (all curriculum but dissertation) self-regulation of doctoral students, they discovered the need for self-regulating strategy coursework to promote dissertation completion (Kelly, & Salisbury-Glennon, 2016, p. 97). In this study, the researcher suffered a three-year gap between course completion and dissertation achievement due to dissertation anxiety. In this case, self-regulation coursework could only benefit and propel dissertation completion.

The terms, self-regulation and control, are used interchangeably. *The Handbook of Self-Regulatio*n plainly stated that "regulation was a control process" (Vohs & Baumeister, 2016, p. 28). A *European Journal of Education* article lumped self-regulation into three components: "cycles of forethought, performance or volitional control, and self-reflection" (Steffens, 2015, p. 49). Per a Booth et al. (2018) article, *Self-Regulation: Learning Across Disciplines*, self-regulation was sectioned into two critical processes: focus and attention to task (and the ability to seamlessly shift to a different task) and impulse control (p. 3769). Also, in the *Handbook of Self-Regulation*, Vohs & Baumeister (2016) parenthesized self-control when defining self-regulation. They compared self-regulation (self-control) to goal setting, stating that self-regulation

"enhances the likelihood of achieving important goals" (p. 183). Another *Issues in Educational Research* article associated self-regulatory processes with approach-oriented goal orientation (Cosnefroy et al., 2018, p. 330). In other words, self-regulators modify their behaviors to reach goals that favor themselves or others.

When referencing control, self-regulation is often coupled with goal setting—whether directly referenced or inferred. The *Handbook of Self-Regulation* described self-control as

> the ability to alter one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors or to override impulse and habits, allowing one to monitor and regulate oneself to meet expectations. These expectations can be imposed by society or by oneself, and include laws, norms, ideals, goals, and other standards. (Vohs & Baumeister, 2016, p. 42)

They also discussed habits, a routine goal-setting behavior (Williams, 2018, paras. 2-3). Vohs and Baumeister (2018), comparing strong self-control to good habits (or breaking bad habits). They believed that, by forming habits, goal attainment was eminent (pp. 102-103). However, they admitted that self-control was not the singular self-regulatory challenge. Self-regulation presented other challenges such as goal setting, goal pursuit, and goal orientation (Vohs & Baumeister, 2016, p. 156).

In their thesis, Acosta and Hall (2018) referenced that, "self-regulation is a construct that has been defined in a myriad of ways" p. 32. They compared four definitions—one mentioned delaying gratification and controlling impulses, one talked about suppressing emotions and the other described it as the midway point between stimuli and its effects. The final, eccentric definition divided self-regulation from self-control, citing that self-control is limited to halting action/behavior whereas self-

regulation concentrates on halting and understanding the "why" behind doing it (p. 32).

Although, Acosta and Hall copiously explained their claim, they only supported

performance-avoidance goal orientation—not performance-approach goal orientation.

A deep dive into self-regulation perceptions might elicit the same response as an

exposition-heavy novel—confusion or complete loss of interest. Steffens (2015)

described self-regulation as a "meta-learning theory but not learning per se" (p. 49).

Bandura (1986) stated that self-efficacy and self-regulation influenced each other.

Pajares (2008) piggybacked Bandura's viewpoint, regarding self-efficacy and self-

regulation as equal contributors (van Meeuwen et al., 2018, p. 55). Acosta and Hall

(2018) believed that self-regulation was "a necessity for human connection" (p. 33).

They also referenced the criticism of one-dimensional self-regulatory measures—not

capturing "emotional or physiological abilities," only cognitive (Pyman & Smith-Chant,

2017). In his dissertation research, Cosme (2020, p. 61) cited that motivation facilitates

"goal pursuit and self-regulation" (Werner et al., 2016; Werner & Milyavskaya, 2019).

Regardless of the self-regulation acumen, its benefits cannot be disputed. Self-

regulation utilizes four areas of the brain: "the ventromedial PFC (VPFC), along with the

orbitofrontal cortex (OFC), the lateral PFC (LPFC), and the anterior cingulate cortex"

(Acosta, & Hall, 2018, p. 38). It stimulates the nervous system, guiding stress response,

activating energy, and resting the body (Acosta, & Hall, 2018, p. 34). Through self-

regulation, people can control "time and space"—but not by supernatural means.

Efficiently, they can multitask, transform goal pursuit, and change goal currents (Vohs &

Baumeister, 2016, p. 3). Self-regulation breeds "academic excellence, occupational

accomplishments, stable and satisfying relationships, good adjustment, mental and

physical health, overcoming prejudice, resisting addiction, regulation of criminal and violent acts, positive emotionality, and longevity" (Vohs & Baumeister, 2016, p. 42).

Explicit ties may exist between self-regulation and locus of control. In a *Journal of Employment Counseling* study, Kim and Lee (2018) stated that locus of control is a strategic component of self-regulation (p. 4). A separate *Pharma Innovation Journal* study examined the correlation between locus of control and self-regulation. Their findings uncovered a reciprocal relationship between locus of control and self-regulation (Sidola et al., 2020, p. 122.). Consequently, this study's pre-experiment demographic survey included a self-regulation and locus of control disqualifying question.

Locus of Control

Perception plays an important role in goal pursuit and achievement. It ordinates how a people view the world and what happens to them. Perception regarding personal circumstances can prompt an affirmation (I control this situation) or a repudiation (This situation controls me) (Nowicki, 2016, p. 20). In this study, the researcher disqualified participants based on their response to the locus of control demographic survey question. In goal setting, success is virtually impossible if a person believes they have no control over it (Cherry, 2019, paras. 19-20). A feeling of control represents an internal locus of control (internals), and a feeling of no control represents an external locus of control (externals).

> If you believe that you hold the keys to your fate, you are more likely to take action to change your situation when needed. If, on the other hand, you believe that the outcome is out of your hands, you may be less likely to work toward change." (Cherry, 2019, para. 5)

Change can present itself in the form of academic, athletic, professional, or social achievement (Nowicki, 2016, p. 12). Several peer-reviewed articles examined career locus of control. A *Journal of Business Ethics* study reported that an employee's locus of control "moderates the link between moral judgment and ethical behavior" (Valentine et al., 2019, pp. 661-662). Externals were viewed as unethical and blaming. Internals were perceived as moral and accountable. However, cultural differences within a smaller organization had the potential to shape locus of control (Valentine et al., 2019, pp. 661-662). Another research study investigated the effect of emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior on locus of control. Results revealed that locus of control amplified emotional intelligence (Turnipseed, 2018, p. 322). A separate *Journal of Employment Counseling* study explored the career decision-making self-efficacy and behavior of internals (Kim & Lee, 2018, p. 2). It determined that internal locus of control was a key factor in career adaptability and development (Kim & Lee, 2018, p. 11).

Kim and Lee (2018) considered locus of control a self-regulation strategy (p. 4). But unlike self-regulation, locus of control is not inherent; it develops through learning (Nowicki, 2016, p. 11). In youth, locus of control guides development and cognitive processes (Nowicki, 2016, p. 99). In the *Choice of Chance* book, Nowicki (2016) described contingency reinforcements and expectancy links. His explanation resembled classical conditioning in dog training—linking a treat to a desired action and punishment to a displeasing action. The dog deviated from the disappointing behavior to receive the positive reinforcement (Minette, n.d., para. 4). This taught them how to be internals—being in control of their outcome. Alternatively, if the dog performed the desired action (yet the treat was delayed) or if the dog received a treat without performing the desired

action, it produced an external—no control over the outcome. Essentially, reinforcement, repetition, and consistency motivated the dog; punishment, discouragement, and spontaneity did not (Nowicki, 2016, pp. 59-60).

Even though it plateaus in late adulthood (Nowicki, 2016, p. 11), locus of control can randomly shift directions; externals can become internals and internals can become externals. These shifts can be triggered by life experience, skill, introspection, and independence (Nowicki, 2016, pp. 50-51). However, locus of control can become displaced when uncontrollable outcomes are perceived as controllable (Nowicki, 2016, p. 87).

In terms of competence and ineptness, internals and externals lead a paradoxical relationship. In the *Journal of Employment Counseling*, Kim and Lee (2018) distinguished the difference "between internal and external locus of control. A person's ability and effort are regarded as internal causes of success or failure, whereas powerful others and luck are regarded as external causes" (pp. 4-5). In the *Choice or Chance* book, Nowicki (2016) provided internal/external comparisons that lined up with four personal development areas listed in this study's *Self-Directed Goal Theory*: ambition, mental, physical, and social. With regard to ambition, internals appreciate autonomous learning; externals require structure (p. 12). Financially, internals fare better than externals (p. 109). Both "share the same characteristics of achievement, dominance, endurance, and order. But externals share characteristics of dependence and guilt/belittlement" (p. 148). Mentally, internals tend to be proactive (pp. 19-20), content (p. 114), flexible (pp. 117-119), and self-assured (p. 139); externals are the antithesis of these characteristics.

Physically, internals encourage fitness (Nowicki, 2016, p. 188); in fact, studies have shown that they perform better in sports (Nowicki, 2016, p. 124). Internals understand the importance of health; they listen to their body's signals, thoroughly evaluate doctor's orders, and follow them with no reminders (Nowicki, 2016, p. 12). However, locus of control has cultural variants as it relates to body weight perceptions; some countries care more and some care less (Nowicki, 2016, p. 191).

Socially, internals are perceived as idealistic, optimistic (Nowicki, 2016, pp. 36-37), and communicative (Nowicki, 2016, p. 142). Platonically, women are classified as internals because of their need for active engagement and reciprocation; men are seen as externals because of their "passive and easygoing" nature (Nowicki, 2016, p. 151). In romantic or platonic relationships, internals gravitate toward other internals and vice versa (Nowicki, 2016, p. 149). In dating, internals believe that information deepens the relationship; externals are not natural sharers and have difficulty developing deep relationships. In marriage, externals tend to experience more dissatisfaction and difficulty (Nowicki, 2016, p. 155).

If nirvana hinged on positive attributes, externals would face profound tribulation. Comparisons present internals as something to aspire to and externals as something to flee from. An excerpt from The *Quest for a Moral Compass* book diagnosed internal locus of control as insight when they said:

> Knowledge is liberating because the more we know about ourselves and about the human condition, the more we are able to recognize that we love or hate or find joy or feel pain as the result, not of free choice, but of chance and history and accidental association and past conditioning. Once we realize that, we stop

blaming others for their actions, for these are absolutely determined. (Malik,

2014, pp. 186-188).

For this reason, this study disqualified externals because, based on research, they are not

as successful "in setting and meeting life's goals" (Nowicki, 2016, p. 12). Externals

struggle with completing tasks and (Nowicki, 2016, p. 48), even when they do succeed

from concerted effort, they attribute it to luck or chance (Nowicki, 2016, p. 12).

Internals respond better when they fall short of their goals; they are less "guilty and

critical of themselves" (Nowicki, 2016, p. 27). Internals take responsibility for their

circumstances, "actions and choices" (Nowicki, 2016, p. 11). They can "delay

gratification, gather information and resist coercion" (Nowicki, 2016, pp. 22-23).

Internals are often nicknamed the "Little Engine That Could" (Nowicki, 2016, p. 98). A

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explored the impact of internal locus of control in adult education. They found that, if

they integrated "perseverance and the ability to reflect upon successes and missteps to

underpin continued achievement" into learning, students would feel more in control and

optimistic toward achievement (Korengel, 2018, pp. 95-96).

Several studies regarded externals as risk averse as opposed to their glowing

counterpart, internals, who were risk tolerant. It implied that the essence of locus of

control boiled down to one word, motivation. Two bodies of research explicitly brought

up the word, motivation, when discussing locus of control. In his *Choice or Chance*

book, Norwicki (2016) said that externals "appear to stick to assignments longer when

the reinforcement they receive comes from others instead of deriving from self-directed

motivation" (p. 99). In their peer-reviewed journal article, Kim and Lee (2018) assessed

that motivation was the overarching locus of control trait. Their study results suggested that internal locus of control shadowed motivation, augmented confidence and expanded adaptive capacity (pp. 10-11).

Motivation

Although it may seem grandiosely stated, motivation spurs every external conflict, direct action, or varying emotion. In his dissertation, Redman (2016) cited:

> Motivation is the reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way (Elliot & Covington, 2001, p. 73). Motivation is a theoretical construct used to explain behavior and represents the rationale for people's needs, actions, and desires (Blumenfeld, 1992; Pajares, 2008). Motivation may also be defined as one's direction to behavior or what causes a behavior to be repeated (Chandon et al., 2011). Motivation refers to factors that activate, direct, and sustain goal-directed behavior and the needs or wants that drive behavior and explain actions. (Verschure et al., 2014, p. 2)

A sizable proportion of motivation is compelled by emotion (Galbraith, 2004, p. 143).

Motivation can be swayed by self (intrinsic motivation) or others (extrinsic motivation). In an *Adult Learning* article, Aljohani and Alajlan (2020) presented "five motivational aspects: social contact, family togetherness, social stimulation, cognitive interest, and religious simulation" (p. 153). Like internals and externals (locus of control), people who are internally motivated (intrinsics), make decisions on their own volition such as for curiosity, fascination, or satisfaction (Morey, 2017, pp. 18-19). Intrinsics are, by nature, self-directed and "feel capable of relating emotionally to their environment" (Morey, 2017, p. 25). Their motivational aspects might be cognitive

interest or religious simulation (Aljohani & Alajlan, 2020, p. 153). Externally motivated (extrinsics) people do it because something or someone pressures them to; some motivating factors include monetary reward, punishment, rules, or scrutiny (Morey, 2017, p. 19). Their motivational aspects might be social contact, family togetherness, and social stimulation (Aljohani & Alajlan, 2020, p. 153). Contrary to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, studies also uncovered a third, impartial motivator, task-contingent rewards (Morey, 2017, p. 4). Rewards, alone, influenced the decision process (Morey, 2017, p. 24). Reward- or punishment-provoked motivation is modeled after Pavlov et al. Behavioristic Motivation Theory. They hypothesized that stimuli persuaded or dissuaded behavior or learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, pp. 149-150).

Over the years, several motivational theories were developed—each sharing the same common denominator, self. A handful of these theories targeted self-development, self-expectancy, self-determination, self-efficacy, or self-improvement. First and foremost, the *Sigmund Freud Theory of Personality* established that people could be mentally motivated (Cherry, 2020b, para. 1). *Maslow's Motivational Theory* centered on external motivation. He acknowledged individual perception, postulating that humans operate by current need (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 150) and "internal unconscious development" (Morey, 2017, p. 30). In 1964, Vroom developed the *Expectancy Theory*, presuming that people are intrinsically motivated and make decisions to enhance pleasure or escape pain (Vroom's Expectancy Theory, 2017, para. 1). A separate motivational concept, *The Self-Determination Theory*, declared that a person's mindset can expand or shrink intrinsic motivation (Morey, 2017, p. 30). It also split motivation into three forms: amotivation, extrinsic and intrinsic—each affecting self-determination in a distinct way.

Unlike intrinsics and extrinsics (who can be motivated), amotivated people lack any form of motivation (Crow & Henning, 2020, p. 2). Even motivated people have demotivating triggers. For example, if they perceive an unsuccessful outcome, their motivation is depleted, draining their self-efficacy. The automobile inventor, Ford, passionately voiced his motivation depletion outlook; he said, "whether you think that you can or you can't, you're usually right" (Garofalo, 2016, p. 17). The *Operant Conditioning Theory of Motivation* also repositioned motivation by offering incentives, switching intrinsics to extrinsics (Morey, 2017, p. 30). Alternatively, studies have shown that intrinsic inspiration offers more motivational success (Garafalo, 2016, p. 15).

Numerous theories targeted self-improvement (learning or goal-setting) as a motivating factor. Most importantly, *Roger's Theory of Personality* established that individual betterment (in academic education or personal goal-setting) must be visualized and congruently acted upon (Garofalo, 2016, pp. 14-15). In adult education, Knowles termed Andragogy on the prospect that learners must be motivated to learn (Garofalo, 2016, p. 43). Another adult education professional, Houle, categorized learners as being activity-oriented, learning-oriented, or goal-oriented. That is, learners are motivated depending on the activity, the lesson or to reach a particular goal (Amponsah et al., 2018, p. 588). Another psychological theory, *Yerkes-Dodson Law and Performance*, concentrated on learning (or goal setting) provocation and behavior. It determined that adequate provocation improved behavior yet immoderation exhausted it (Cherry, 2020c, para. 4). Other process theories of motivation such as *Adams' Equity Theory* and *Locke's Goal Theory of Motivation* focused on goal-setting motivation (as cited in Garofalo, 2016, p. 14). From an individual perspective, the *Equity Theory* represented a person

weighing their pros and cons (Adam's Equity Theory, n.d., para. 6) and the *Goal Theory of Motivation* implied that precise and laborious goals are more appealing (Locke's Goal-Setting Theory, n.d., para. 4).

Whether personal or developmental, many instances alter motivational temperament. In general, being familiar with, skilled at, or educated on a particular task builds motivation (Cosme, 2020, p. 19). Intrinsics shift when external reasons are introduced (Morey, 2017, p. 23). On a developmental level, adults can be defined in two ways: those that perform adult actions (such as working, being a parent, or becoming a spouse) and those that behave responsibly and take care of themselves (like Maslow's physiological needs of shelter, water, food, warmth, rest, and/or health) (Galbraith, 2004, p. 144).

A meta-analysis of prospective studies showed that external factors influence motivation such as culture, socialization, geography, religion, family, social status, race, occupation, and economy. Three dissertation reviews revealed cultural, social, and familial motivators. Nomura (2016) conducted a sociocultural analysis of motivation for learning the Japanese language in Hong Kong. Results showed that Hong Kongers were motivated to learn the Japanese language for socialization (Nomura, 2016, p. v), cultural affinity (Nomura, 2016, p. xiii), and geographical proximity (Nomura, 2016, p. 116) reasons.   In her exploratory study of self-efficacy, motivation, and persistence among African American male graduate students, Forster (2019) found that "academic motivation stemmed from family" (p. 23). Some native-born students recognized their parents' struggle and wanted better for themselves. Some foreign students believed it was their genetic duty to succeed (Forster, 2019, p. 23). However, external motivators

did not dominate this study (Forster, 2019, p. 24); most participants reported internal motivators such as "God, economic advantages, social status, intrinsic motivation/innate love for learning and natural curiosity" (Forster, 2019, p. 77). When Hoang (2019) researched community college students' motivation for distance education, he cited that, in adulthood, people become more internally motivated. The findings of Forster and Hoang perfectly aligned with Knowles' andragogical principle, motivation for learning. Children are "mostly motivated by extrinsic factors" such as accomplishment, incentive, or authority and most adults are motivated by intrinsic factors such as interest, respect, or personal development (Pappas, 2015, para. 8). A tricultural examination of peer-reviewed articles revealed that Chinese achievement standards (Yin, 2018, p. 833), Saudi Arabian religious stimulation (Aljohani, & Alajlan, 2020, p. 157), Ghanaian male "professional development" and Ghanaian female "personal knowledge" (Amponsah et al., 2018, p. 603) were sources of academic motivation. Analytically, external motivators can be adopted as internal motivators based on individual perception and situation.

Adult learning and personal development goal-setting harmonize by virtue of motivation. When discussing Andragogy, Merriam and Bierema (2014) asserted that, "adults are motived by wanting to improve their situation in adult life, whether that situation is work-related, personal, or social/community-related" (p. 12). In *The Inquiring Mind* (1961), Houle's studied adult learners to identify their learning motivators. His findings allied goal orientation and motivation. Another Tough book, The *Adult's Learning Projects* (1971), examined self-directed learners' orientation toward projects (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 45). His book unveiled a participant

passage from self-direction (tied to adult learning) to self-planning (tied to personal development goal-setting) (Brockett, & Donaghy, 2005, p. 3).

Adult learners can be motivated internally or externally (Aljohani & Alajlan, 2020, p. 153). In Aljohani and Alajlan's (2020) research on Saudi Arabian adult learners, they validated varying adult motivations. They supplemented their validation with five motivators: "social contact, family togetherness, social stimulation, cognitive interest, and religious stimulation" (p. 150). These motivators echoed the personal development areas listed in the researcher's *Self-Directed Goal Theory*.

Overflowing research agreed that motivation is the cornerstone of personal development. Two peer-reviewed studies targeted the researcher's personal development area, Physical. A researcher characterized Physical as a person's health or outward appearance. In her dissertation about behavioral and neural effects of self-determined choice on goal pursuit, Cosme (2020) examined a Physical personal development topic, "cravings for personally-desired foods" (p. iv). She determined that people are more successful and self-regulated when they guide their own personal development (Cosme, 2020, p. 101). In a *Journal of Community Health* article, Bardach et al. (2016) explored diet and exercise patterns in older adults. Their findings uncovered "three main factors that influence the likelihood of making a lifestyle change: perceptions of old age, personal motivation, and perceived confidence in the ability to make effective changes" (pp. 22-24).

Motivation denotes action. It "addresses people's activities and why those pursuits are undertaken" (Aljohani, & Alajlan, 2020, p. 152). Motivation also provokes virtue adaptation (Snow, & Narvaez, 2019, p. 19). Findings from Numura's (2016)

sociocultural thesis on learning motivation linked "Japanese language learning and the ideology of personal moral cultivation which is claimed to be part of the ethos of Hong Kong Chinese" (p. 68). In his book, *Moral Cultivation*, Wilburn (2007) described it as "developing our moral understanding, our actions, and our feelings" (p. 2). Essentially, it "reshapes emotions, and emotional tendencies" (Wilburn, 2007, p. 3). A cultivated person does not just meet their goal; they develop the appropriate attitude toward it—and attitude improvement is transferable toward future goals (Wilburn, 2007, p. 4). For example, if a woman wanted to lose weight, she would not just follow a diet and exercise plan—she would develop an overall self-control virtue. Self-control allows a person to "restrain emotions, desires, or impulses" in any area (Kirby, 2021, para. 40)—not just physical health.

Virtue

Motivation is incited by character adjustment and virtue cultivation (Snow & Narvaez, 2019, p. 19). In simple terms, it rouses ethical motivation, inspiring a person to prioritize ethical action over goals and needs (Lies & Narvaez, 2001, p. 7). Most "traits and characteristic adaptations" are considered virtues (Snow, & Narvaez, 2019, p. 18). In his doctoral research on cultivating behavior, Courant (2020) described virtue as "an acquired human quality that enables us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods" (pp. 143-144). Virtues involve "action, habits, character, and lifestyle" (Sison et al., 2020, p. 248). Virtue cultivation requires more than action; it commands sentiment (Courant, 2020, p. 165).

Although virtue has been widely associated with religion, it serves a functional purpose in the secular world (Courant, 2020, p. 21). In their *Journal of Business Ethics* article, Chan and Ananthram (2019) researched India's religious culture as it related to mindset and virtue. Their results spotlighted religion as the virtue and mindset advocate (p. 674). Virtue strayed away from religion and towards human freedom during the Kantian movement (Kant, 2020, para. 70). An 18th century philosopher, Kant, drew his own inspiration from previous philosophical work. Kant (2020) believed that people "behaved morally because of their sense of duty" (Kant, 2020, para. 70). In other words, they took certain actions because they wanted to.

In his book, *The Quest for a Moral Compass*, Malik (2014) coupled virtues in two separate conditions: intellectual virtues/rational soul and moral virtues/irrational soul (p. 36). Intellectual virtues "such as wisdom, comprehension, and prudence" dwell in the rational soul, embodying reason (Karimova et al., 2020, p. 258-259), and fostering truth. Moral virtues like generosity, honesty, gratitude, chastity (Malik, 2014, p. 154), liberality, and moderation exist in the irrational soul, combining reason with conscious action (Malik, 2014, p. 36), and encouraging order (Malik, 2014, p. 154). Virtue has also been split between self-regarding (such as "spirituality, self-control, and self-efficacy") and other-regarding (like "altruism and empathy") Some self-regarding virtues indirectly spill over into other-regarding; for example, if a person is wise, courageous, or controlled, it may positively impact their interaction with others (Song & Kim, 2018, p. 1161).

Virtue carries different interpretations depending on location, culture, religion, and age (Snow, & Narvaez, 2019, p. 167). However, despite its subjective meanings, one

thing holds true—it has always been tied to optimism and happiness (Courant, 2020, p. 182; Malik, 2014, p. 47). Given the ideological consensus, virtue may be perceived as self-directed. However, this is only partially untrue. People can learn virtue from family, peers, or media (Courant, 2020, p. 120). But, most importantly, virtue (or lack thereof) stems from individual circumstances (Rogers, 2021, p. 156). Virtue cultivation requires diligence and incessant work (Zhang, 2020, p. 273). Besides, "even the easiest growing thing, if it gets one day of warmth and 10 days of frost, there has never been anything that is capable of growing" (Zhang, 2020, p. 276).

Circumstantial evidence unites virtue and Andragogy. The book, *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice*, admitted that learning, in general, was founded on philosophy (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 24). In their *Journal of Business Ethics* virtue article, Newstead et al. (2020) associated learning with Pedagogy (p. 611). In his book, *The Authority of Virtue*, Rogers (2021) expressed that "virtuous activity requires self-direction" (p. 143). He also said that it takes a virtuous foundation to develop virtue; specifically, the unwise do not have the capacity to be self-directed (Rogers, 2021, p. 138). Alternatively, a *Journal of Business Ethics* article did not mention virtue prerequisites; it simply said that virtue can be acquired through "proper cultivation, education, and self-regulation" (Sison et al., 2020, p. 249). The slight statement variation sparked a question: what is really required to cultivate virtue? Does inherent virtue spark the yearning for more virtue? Can people with no virtuous foundation learn to be virtuous? Do nonvirtuous people even care about developing virtue? The researcher believed that the findings of her *Self-Directed Goal Theory* (Group 1) will provide specks of insight into these queries.

Although the previously referenced evidence can be assigned to either children or adults, additional research plainly unified Andragogy and virtue. In their *Journal of Business Ethics* article, Karimova et al. (2020) mentioned that Eastern philosophy favored Deontology (p. 270). The results of a study concerning age differences in moral judgment revealed that "older adults made significantly more deontological moral judgments" (McNair et al., 2018, p. 47). From an instructor's viewpoint, virtues such as justice, care, and duty are necessary to properly instruct (Galbraith, 2004, p. 165).

Virtues have been generally regarded as character traits, systematically modifying a person's values, choices, desires, strength, or weakness of will, emotions, feelings, perceptions, interests, expectations, and sensibilities (Courant, 2020, p. 28). Virtues are selfless. By cultivating virtue, a person considers the big picture. He or she understands the interconnectivity of people and adopts a community mindset (Courant, 2020, p. 95). From a Biblical stance, virtues support the *Golden Rule*, "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Britannica, 2017, para. 1). In a temporal sense, virtue looks a lot like the ripple effect of kindness—singular acts that provoke plural reactions (Allen, n.d., para. 4). To illustrate, Car A is in a restaurant drive-through. Car A pays for Car B's meal (the car behind them). In turn, Car B pays for the car behind them (Car C) and so forth. Car A served as the virtue catalyst, impressing on others to follow suit. However, virtues stretch far beyond simple acts of kindness. It involves finding the noble act inside any experience (Malik, 2014, p. 150) —perhaps even when pursuing goals.

From a philosophical viewpoint, pursuing goals without considering virtue is futile. Researchers have questioned, "Does virtue make the goal right or the things toward the goal?" In "Aristotle's characterization of virtue throughout the ethical works:

he defines virtue as a non-rational state and characterizes it as literally supplying the contents of our goals." Conflicting research suggested that phronesis, practical intellect, aids in goal setting (Moss, 2011, pp. 1-2). Universally, when pursuing goals, all roads led to virtue in some capacity.

Through the lens of virtue, a person can "imagine and consider realistic outcomes" (Courant, 2020, p. 127). Several landmark studies observed that virtue amplifies motivation (intrinsic or extrinsic) (Newstead et al., 2020, p. 615), emotional intelligence (Snow, & Narvaez, 2019, p. 52), financial accountability (Sison et al., 2019, p. 1006), leadership skills (Newstead et al., 2020, p. 610), interconnectedness, introspectiveness, systematic survival, and sustainability, (Karakas et al., 2017, pp. 734-738) and overall wellbeing (Courant, 2020, p. 202). Additionally, virtue cultivation decreases the possibility of karma (Malik, 2014, p. 82) and being manipulated by others (Courant, 2020, pp. 169-170). Most importantly, virtue has polyvalent characteristics; they can support numerous goals—not just one (Zhang, 2020, p. 256).

Virtues provide balance for people from all walks of life—from the most destitute to the most privileged (Courant, 2020, p. 96). In his doctoral investigation, Courant's (2020) virtue explanation was equivalent to passing an exam without studying; although it can happen, it may be difficult without aligning the action with the goal (p. 154). Characteristically, virtue cultivation "levels up all relevant affective and deliberative abilities and, if done efficiently, should ultimately lead to improving one's character as a whole" (Zhang, 2020, pp. 256-257). For all these reasons, the researcher built the virtue focus area into her *Self-Directed Goal Theory*.

Conclusion

What is the purpose?

The purpose of this experimental study was to explore the theory that personal development goal-setting requires self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy. The researcher performed a comparative analysis of self-efficacy improvement, utilizing one control group and two experimental groups. The 60-day control group independently chose their personal development goal-setting program. The experimental groups consisted of a 30-day guided personal development goal-setting program and a 60-day self-directed personal development goal-setting program. The researcher followed a triangulation strategy to investigate two data collection methods: grounded theory and instrumental case study. The grounded theory approach sought to fulfill the study's overarching purpose. The instrumental case study method sought to accomplish two objectives: measure the performance of the researcher's original *Self-Directed Goal Theory* and diagnose a definitive blueprint, timespan, and catalyst for boosting self-efficacy and accomplishing personal development goals.

How was the literature review crafted and why?

In this literature review, the researcher examined history and comparative data to provide a solid foundation for her study. Her use of analogy offered simple explanations for complex information. The bullets below outline the what and why of each study topic:

- The researcher sought to achieve two overarching goals: highlight self-directed learning as a perpetual Andragogy component and expand the field by introducing personal development goal-setting as a self-directed learning subset.

Accordingly, she chose Andragogy as the opening topic and Self-Directed Learning as the second topic.

- The next topic, Self-Efficacy, served as the study's dependent variable.

- Personal Development Areas explained the rationale behind goal choices.

- Goal Setting involved the strategy behind personal development goal achievement and served as the study's independent variable.

- The researcher's curiosity about pedagogical undertones inspiring goal attainment drove her to select the data collection topic, Self-Monitoring Checklists. From personal experience, this data collection method exposes unconscious behaviors/patterns and potential obstacles when pursuing goals.

- Another data collection method, demographic surveys, qualified study participants; consequently, she featured two disqualifying topics, Locus of Control and Self-Regulation.

The researcher investigated three goal-setting programs to identify a specific goal formula, source, and timeframe. To add an additional research layer, she used one program to test her original formula, *The Self-Directed Goal Theory*. This theory concentrates on two topics that generate action: Motivation and Virtue.

What does the culmination of research reveal?

Research shows that, since the dawn of Andragogy, history has continued to repeat itself. The incessant ebbs and flows of Andragogy may be symptomatic of its enduring qualities. Besides, Andragogy begets self-direct learning—and self-directedness can be implemented academically, professionally, or personally. The

researcher probed the personal side of self-directed learning, personal development goal-setting. Extensive research of each topic revealed that:

- Education, in general, has been associated with philosophy and psychology.

- Personal development is also considered learning.

- Self-efficacy can be affected by culture, race, livelihood, family, status, or gender.

- Each person diagnoses their own description of wellness.

- The act of goal setting (whether achieved or not), teaches a slew of skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, and lifelong learning. It also improves well-being, confidence, tolerance, vitality, happiness and, in some cases, outcome.

- Goal actualization is conditional; it requires competence, performance, resources, capacity, accuracy, behavior, self-regulation, attitude, motivation, circumstance, and/or perception to thrive.

- The investigation of adult learning and personal development goal-setting is infinite; without narrow focus, researchers are liable to travel down a rabbit hole of learning (i.e., experience, effects, lifelong, self-directed, process, style, performance, monitoring, behavior, justification, environment, orientation, motivation, choice, preconditions, ability, objectivity, readiness, tools, self-reflection, ability, informal/formal, transaction, characteristics, concept, interpretation, freedom, principles, project, control, inventory, needs, goals,

model, evaluation, theory, observation, effectiveness, inspiration, focus, outcome, skill, trends/patterns, competence, discipline, and love).

- All learning (formal or informal) must consider individual life experiences and personal needs.

- Self-directed learning is not purely sovereign, it requires a foundation.

- The research yielded several dueling topics: internal/external locus of control, internal/external moral codes, male/female gender roles, virtue producing the right goal/virtue aiding any goal, positive/negative Andragogy perceptions, habits in three weeks/66 days, introspection helping/hurting, good/bad self-monitoring results, task/ego orientation, Andragogy/Pedagogy, instructor/learner, non-reflective/reflective people, inherent/taught, and avoidance-oriented/approach-oriented goals. Some topics were subjective, carrying a myriad of interpretations (such as well-being, virtue, and self-regulation), and degrees (like self-directedness levels and self-monitoring strategies).

- Some research exposed linked topics such as stress/self-efficacy, goal-setting/motivation, self-regulation/goal-setting, intellectual virtues/rational soul, moral virtues/irrational soul, self-regulation/control, learning contract/personal development, self-monitoring/change management, self-directedness/character, virtue/kindness, self-directed learning/self-efficacy, self-efficacy/motivation, locus of control/self-regulation, locus of control/motivation, motivation/personal development, self-directed

learning/personal development, goal-setting/performance, self-regulation/goal-setting, goal pursuit/capacity, and virtue/Andragogy.

- All motivational theories point to self.

- Goal source does not influence performance; the individual does.

- Many subtopics branch from the topic, goal-setting, such as achievement, theory, orientation, implementation, contribution, thoughts, involvement, climate, performance, process, outcome, driver, approach, avoidance, effect, importance, source, planning, execution, failure, framing, characteristic, complexity, ranking, timeframe, intention, challenge, behavior, statement, task, journey, paradigm, barrier, pursuit, current, labor, development, number, thought, construction, and control.

- This topic revealed several determinants such as cultural sensitivity necessitating self-efficacy improvement, goal pursuit requiring virtue cultivation, life experience/skill shifting locus of control, motivation driving emotion, motivation/emotion activating behavior, good physical health demanding good mental health, self-directing learning needing self-efficacy, motivation igniting action, character adjustment/virtue cultivation inciting motivation, adult learning/personal development needing motivation, and external motivators shifting to internal based on perception/situation.

The lone barrier involved unethical participant behaviors in goal-setting experiments. Researchers can only report what they are told.

What does the reviewed literature implicate?

A large body of evidence suggests that:

- Most personal development goal-setting programs have been either solely guided or entirely autonomous; no programs marry individuation and structure.

- The researcher was unable to locate any personal development goal-setting programs that integrated self-directed learning methodologies, motivation, or virtue.

- Even though research revealed that personal development goal-setting aligns with self-directed learning, no studies involved the use of self-monitoring checklists.

- Previous goal-setting studies have not shown longitudinal data on goal timeframes or specific goal formulas.

- Andragogy has been looked at from a holistic point-of-view—not compartmentally.

  - Additional research on self-efficacy and perception is necessary.

  - Specific personal development areas have not been firmly defined since Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

  - Previous goal theories have acknowledged motivation yet never used it to guide behavior.

  - Minimal research covered the necessity for virtue cultivation in goal setting.

What comes next?

In Chapter Three, the research sought to fill in the aforementioned gaps. The researcher's methodological review encompassed concise research questions, instrumentation, data collection methods, data analysis processes, and ethical considerations. From a qualitative angle, the researcher described her review of

participant perception, motivation, and behavior. From a quantitative perspective, the

researcher explained her analysis of pre/post self-efficacy assessment results.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

Despite arguments regarding Andragogy's soundness, its eminent component, self-directed learning, cannot be questioned. Since self-directed learning has been used formally and informally, it serves several purposes—even within the personal development arena. Chapter One referenced the conceptual framework of personal development and theoretical framework of goal setting. It presented three research questions regarding personal development goal-setting, self-efficacy, and goal timing, and two hypotheses regarding self-directedness. It also established the researcher's original theory, *The Self-Directed Goal Theory*. Lastly, it underlined the experiment's assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

Chapter Two, the literature review, introduced two disciplines relevant to this study: education and psychology. Subtopics (self-efficacy, personal development areas, goal-setting, self-monitoring, self-regulation, locus of control, and motivation) were strategically placed to show their relationships. Each reviewed previous literature stateside or abroad, mentioning revelations and implications.

Chapter Thee dug into the nitty-gritty of the researcher's methodology—her experimental thought process, instruments, analysis, and study sample.

Problem and Purpose Synopsis

The researcher assessed the limits of adult learning theory, self-directed learning, by shedding light on personal development goal-setting. Accordingly, this study included adult participants only.

The purpose of this experimental study investigated the hypothesis that personal development goal-setting requires self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy. To do so, the researcher conducted a comparative analysis, utilizing two experimental groups (a 30-day guided and 60-day self-directed personal development goal-setting program) and one control group. The control group independently chose their personal development goal-setting program.

Independent Variable

Since each group completed different personal development goal-setting programs to improve self-efficacy, the chosen personal development goal-setting programs were considered the independent variables.

Dependent Variable

Since self-efficacy was measured pre- and post-experiment, it was considered the dependent variable.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

People vary by their appearance, achievements, goals, motor abilities, sex, race, nationality, personal interests, emotions, personality, hereditary traits, environments, caste, age, education levels, economic conditions (Zav, n.d., paras. 5-40), and life experiences. Consequently, canned personal development programs may not garner remarkable performance. In this study, the researcher measured self-efficacy levels of guided and self-directed personal development programs, examined optimal timing, and analyzed goal-setting characteristics.

The following research questions were investigated:

Research Question 1

What is the optimal timing for personal development goal-setting?

Research Question 2

With regard to self-efficacy improvement, what is the difference between guided

and self-directed personal development goal-setting?

Research Question 3

What specific personal development goal-setting characteristics are necessary to

maximize self-efficacy?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this mixed methods study were as follows:

Hypothesis (H_0)

Personal development goal-setting does not require self-directedness to maximize

self-efficacy.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a)

Personal development goal-setting does require self-directedness to maximize

self-efficacy.

Null Hypothesis 1 (μ_1)

There will be no difference in self-efficacy between a control group and an

experimental group completing the *Manifest Anything You Want in 30 Days book*

(Emanuele, 2013).

Null Hypothesis 2 (μ_2)

There will be no difference in self-efficacy between a control group and an

experimental group completing *The Self-Directed Goal Theory*.

Research Design

Methodology

Even though this is a mixed methods study, the data collected were largely qualitative. This study integrated two independent disciplines: Psychology (educational, cognitive, personality, and behavioral) and Education (Pedagogy and Andragogy). In the past, mixed methods approaches were discouraged in psychological research; researchers believed that qualitative approaches were time-consuming and required more resources. They assumed that qualitative findings simply compensated for subpar quantitative results. This assumption could not be further from the truth. True, quantitative research provides numeric certainties. But an added qualitative layer develops theories (Creamer & Reeping, 2020, p. 2), exposes themes/patterns (Creamer & Reeping, 2020, p. 3), clarifies "complex social phenomenon" (Creamer & Reeping, 2020, p. 2), "converts narrative data to numeric values" (Creamer & Reeping, 2020, p. 3) and, in the researcher's opinion, assigns texture to otherwise flat logic. In the education field, mixed-methods approaches identify and explore learning processes, provide educational insight into individual differences, and build instruments that reflect idiosyncratic educational experiences (McCrudden et al., 2019, p. 1).

Additionally, the researcher employed the grounded theory to analyze her original *Self-Directed Goal Theory*. This inductive methodology allowed the researcher to effectively measure the validity and effectiveness of her theoretical formula: *1 Personal Development Area Focus + 1 SMART Goal + 1 Virtue Focus + 21 Daily Tasks + 21 Daily Motivators = Goal Achievement*. Grounded theory can be used qualitatively or quantitatively. Systematically, it delves into theories and paradigms to support deep-seated comprehension, fostering creativity and promoting critical thinking (Saunders et al., 2012, para. 2).

Instrument

In this study, three qualitative data collection methods were utilized: surveys, checklists, and interviews. The researcher administered an original demographic survey (comprised of background, experience, opinion, and feelings questions) to qualify participants and ensure an unbiased sample, an original self-monitoring checklist to assist participants in diagnosing their performance and interviews to gather additional information about the participant's subjective experience. When investigating interview and checklist data, the researcher utilized content and thematic analyses to translate meaningful written/verbal patterns. From a quantitative perspective, the study used pre and post self-efficacy assessments to statistically analyze self-efficacy improvements.

Instrumentation. In this study, the researcher analyzed the validity of instrument results based on the Whittemore et al. (2001) primary criterion:

1. "Credibility (Are the results an accurate interpretation of the participants' meaning?)

2. Authenticity (Are different voices heard?)

3. Criticality (Is there a critical appraisal of all aspects of the research?)

4. Integrity (Are the investigators self-critical?) (Creswell & Poth, 2013, para. 3)

Valid results rouse instrument reliability (Middleton, n.d., para. 4). The

researcher opted to use five instruments: a demographic survey (to qualify participants

and document the sample distribution), a self-monitoring checklist (for participants to

evaluate their actions and boost accountability), final interviews (to ask pointed questions

regarding the participant experience), and the *General Self-Efficacy Assessment* (to

measure pre- and post-experiment changes). Additionally, the researcher tasked

participants with completing a group document post-experiment (to pull data potentially

missed with other measurement tools). The researcher's instrument provisions were:

- ***Demographic Survey*** (Appendix H) – The survey questions told a story about the

  study's sample. According to *SurveyMonkey*, a demographic questionnaire

  should achieve a particular goal/objective, be brief and concise, include "personal

  identity questions like gender, race, ethnicity, etc." (Gathering demographic

  information from surveys, n.d., para. 28), respect privacy, explain purpose and, be

  easily accessible (Gathering demographic information from surveys, n.d., para.

  28). The researcher took these tips into consideration when drafting survey

  questions. Before delving into the survey, she explained the purpose, description,

  question quantity and instructions. She included personal identity questions, such

  as gender, age, level of education, ethnicity, employment status, marital status,

  and number of children. She provided a "Prefer not to say" option for each

  survey question. Additionally, she utilized the survey for participant qualification

  and additional data collection. Question nine assessed the participant's current

mood and/or stress level; the researcher included the same question in the final interview for comparison purposes. Participants with "No" responses to locus of control and self-regulation questions (Questions 10 and 11) were disqualified from the experiment. The demographic survey was uploaded to *Qualtrics* and emailed to the participant. *Qualtrics* is a university-focused "web-based survey tool used to conduct survey research evaluations, and other data collection activities" (*Qualtrics*: What is *Qualtrics*?, 2020, para. 1). With this tool, participants were identified by four-digit numbers.

- *Self-Monitoring Checklist* (Appendix Y) – Since self-directedness can be applied to both children and adults, it made sense to integrate pedagogical strategies into the study. With regard to personal development programs, the self-monitoring checklist allowed participants to realize and alter goal-contradicting behavior (also known as cognitive dissonance) (Self-Monitoring, 2021, para. 1; McLeod, 2014, para. 1). The researcher intentionally designed a one-page checklist, covering nine days and 19 behaviors. She believed that, by viewing multiple days at once, participants could easily spot trends/patterns. All 19 checklist behaviors were derived from various web searches and the researcher's personal experience.

- *Final Interview* (Appendix HH) – This study relied heavily on qualitative research. "Interviews are most effective for qualitative research; they collect a rich source of information from a small number of people about attributes, behavior, preferences, feelings, attitudes, opinions, and knowledge" (Research Methods Guide: Interview Research, 2018, paras. 1-2). Since interview questions are open-ended, responses are unlimited (Research Methods Guide: Interview

Research, 2018, para. 2), allowing the researcher to focus on key words/topics relating to the participant experience. Additionally, interviews can be conducted in-person, via phone, or virtual meeting platform (Research Methods Guide: Interview Research, 2018, para. 3). This method's characteristics appealed to the researcher; she aimed for a small population size of 15, desired open communication and depth to her research, and needed to take safe communication precautions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher created an interview preparation document (Appendix HH), broken into five sections: Timing, Interview Format, Standard Questions, Probing Questions, and Closing Information. Interview responses, in general, range from one to two minutes (Scupi, 2017, para. 2). Considering this time length, the researcher assessed a 30–45-minute interview length for 15 questions; the additional 15 minutes accounted for additional questions, interview information (timing and format), additional probing questions, potentially longer responses, and closing information. At the start of the interview, the researcher set interview expectations by explaining time and interview format. The interview format covered the purpose, question preparation/delivery, response notetaking, researcher contact information, open dialogue, and questions. The researcher selected five personality-specific questions and 10 experiment-specific questions. The personality-specific questions were:

- What is the easiest way for you to learn?
- What is your opinion on tackling one goal or multiple goals at once?
- Currently, what are the three most important areas in your life?

- What do you think is required for someone to reach their goals?

- In general, how would you rate your mental health (mood and/or stress level): excellent, very good, good, fair, poor, or would you prefer not to say?

In the researcher's opinion, personality-specific questions provided an added layer to participant data by identifying personality/action connections. The final mental health question was replicated from the demographic survey—to explore possible mental health changes pre- and post-experiment. The experiment-specific questions aligned directly with research questions, inquiring about optimal timing, self-directedness, goal-setting program differences, and specific personal development goal-setting characteristics. The questions were:

1. What motivated you to participate in this experiment?

2. What group did you participate in and why?

3. How did you feel about your group's timeframe?

4. What was/were the personal development goal/s you selected? Did you achieve it/them?

5. Tell me about your experience participating in this experiment.

6. What did it feel like to (Group 1: create your own tasks/motivators / Group 2: complete the scheduled daily tasks / Group 3: follow your own path/plan)?

7. How would you describe your attitude and approach toward the experiment?

8. What stood out to you the most during the experiment?

9. Did you complete any self-monitoring checklists? If so, what did you notice?

10. If you could go back and do something differently in the experiment, what would it be—and why?

Effective communication can be achieved by actively listening and asking probing questions. It garners additional information, clarifies responses, and offers alternative perspectives (Active Listening & Effective Questioning, n.d., paras. 6-13). Accordingly, the researcher sought questions she believed would elicit the maximum feedback for her experiment type. She opted to use the following probing questions (Active Listening & Effective Questioning, n.d., para. 13):

- In what way?

- Were there other...?

- How did you do that?

- What happened then?

- How did that happen?

- What do you think about…?

- Was that what you expected?

- And how did you feel about that?

- Would you tell me more about that?

- What do you mean when you say…?

- What would you like to have happened?

- Was there anything you liked/disliked about it?

When reviewing the Self-Monitoring Checklist (Appendix Y), the researcher noticed that no space was allotted for emotions (such as sadness, anxiety, etc.). To fill this gap, she inquired about potential emotions when referencing the self-monitoring checklist.

- *General Self-Efficacy Assessment* (Appendix Z) – The researcher searched for a dependent variable that measured potential pre- and post-experiment self-efficacy changes. She measured several self-efficacy scales against three requirements: brevity, vetting, and transferability. Since the same assessment was initiated pre- and post-experiment, the researcher considered participants' time and effort. The *General Self-Efficacy Scale* (GSE) is composed of 10 statements that evaluate optimism and coping abilities (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995, para. 1). Thoroughly-vetted assessments paved the way for transferability—allowing the researcher to easily compare her results to similar academic research (Transferability, n.d., para. 1). In 40 years, the GSE has been used in more than 1,000 studies among various countries and 33 languages (Schwarzer, 2014, pp. 1-2).

- *Group Documents* (Appendices A-D) – This study investigated three groups: Experimental Group 1 (a 60-day self-directed program based on the researcher's original *Self-Directed Goal Theory*), Experimental Group 2 (a 30-day guided program from the book, *Manifest Anything You Want in 30 Days* (Emanuele, 2013), and Control Group 3 (60-day monitoring of a goal-setting program/process of the participant's choice). Groups varied by guidance, timeframe, and goal amount. Experimental groups were measured against the control group; since control group participants had full autonomy, they were not influenced by the dependent variable, self-efficacy. However, in the researcher's opinion, her control group required an iota of "control" to monitor autonomy—and determine that a goal-setting plan was followed at all. The Group 3 Control Group

Document (Appendix D) suggested the Self-Monitoring Checklist to monitor task/goal difficulty, nine original questions related to goal selection and 10 questions related to goal planning.

Population and Sample

Sample

This study's entire population size was 714 to 729. The study sample targeted three groups of five, totaling a minimum of 15 overall participants. Studies showed that the researcher's 15 participant sample size was sufficient; a minimum sample size of 12 is necessary to achieve theoretical saturation (Fugard & Potts, 2014). Qualified study participants sought to improve their self-efficacy. Self-efficacy improvements do not guarantee goal achievement—but do increase the odds.

> Perceived self-efficacy is a person's belief in their capacity to perform in certain ways that give them control over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy expectations equal convictions that one can successfully perform behaviors required to produce a given outcome. As well as impacting on behavior, beliefs about self-efficacy also contribute to the regulation of emotional well-being. (Cohen & Cairns, 2012, p. 317)

Sample Demographics

The researcher used the convenience sampling method to select study participants. Given the social media population, this selection criteria appeared to be the most appropriate. It was simple and helpful for hypothesis generation. Additionally, this experiment lasted 60 days and, with convenience sampling, data can be collected in a short duration of time (Dudovskiy, n.d., para. 9). Since study participants were recruited

via social media, the researcher applied a broad geographic restriction of the United

States only. While cross-cultural research can add greatly to literary research, it does not

serve well for study samples.

Although the researcher resided in the St. Louis area, the geographical scope

reached across the entire United States. Ironically, IRB approval was granted at the brink

of the new year (2021)—directly before resolutions are born. The timing could not be

better! Since Ancient times, the new year has represented a fresh start—ridding the self

of bad habits and adopting better ones. The new year also carries rituals that predict a

person's fortune, wealth, happiness, and a long life (Britannica, 2020, paras. 5-6).

Data Collection

Experimental Framing. The researcher utilized two experimental groups and

one control group to conduct research. The two experimental groups included separate

goal-setting programs: The Self-Directed Goal Theory (Group 1- the researcher's original

self-directed, goal-setting program) and the Manifest Anything You Want in 30 Days

book (Group 2- a 30-day guided, goal-setting program) (Emanuele, 2013). Even though

Control Group 3 selected their own goal-setting program, they were monitored

throughout the experiment (at the 30- & 60-day mark). Experimental Group 1

participants set two goals, Experimental Group 2 set one goal, and Control Group 3

selected their own goal quantity.

Sequence of Events. The experiment's sequence of events was as follows:

1. The researcher utilized the recruiting flyer (Appendix F) to make several

   Facebook and *Instagram* posts to recruit experiment participants. Those

interested were asked to contact the researcher via *Facebook* messenger, *Instagram* direct message, email, or phone.

2. The researcher utilized an original demographic survey (Appendix H) to qualify potential participants. It was sent from *Qualtrics* to the potential participant's personal email. In the body of the email (Appendix I), the researcher asked them to confirm receipt of the email. Participants were given one week to complete the survey (Appendix H).

3. The researcher emailed (Appendix J) potential participants who did not confirm receipt of the emailed demographic survey (Appendix H) within three days.

4. Potential participants were given one week (from the date received) to complete the demographic survey (Appendix H).

5. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram* posts (Appendix F).

6. Throughout the participant recruiting process, nonresponsive participants were contacted twice and then excluded from the experiment. However, if they responded later, qualified as a final participant (based on self-regulatory and locus of control demographic survey questions), and completed all pre-experiment requirements, they were welcome to still participate in the experiment.

7. The researcher sent a response email (Appendix K) as she received completed demographic surveys (Appendix H). In the email, she initiated next steps in the participation process.

8. As the researcher received completed demographic surveys (Appendix H), she checked for "No" responses to the self-regulatory and locus of control questions. Those participants were disqualified from the sample (Appendix L).

9. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram* posts (Appendix F).

10. The researcher sent disqualified participants the Ineligibility Reference Tool via email (Appendix L).

11. The researcher emailed all participants selected for the experiment. In the email (Appendix M), the researcher asked them to confirm receipt of the email. She also informed them about next steps in the process: signing the Adult Informed Consent Document (Appendix N) and scheduling an initial meeting with researcher via phone or virtual meeting platform. The Adult Informed Consent Document (Appendix N) was attached to the email. Participants were asked to sign and email the Adult Informed Consent Document (Appendix N) back to the researcher. Participants were encouraged to request a particular group and/or come up with initial meeting questions. Participants were given one week to email back the signed Adult Informed Consent Document (Appendix N).

12. The researcher emailed (Appendix O) participants who did not confirm receipt of the emailed Adult Informed Consent Document (Appendix N) within three days.

13. Participants were given one week (from the date received) to email the signed Adult Informed Consent Document (Appendix N) back to the researcher.

14. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram* posts (Appendix F).

15. Throughout the participant recruiting process, nonresponsive participants were contacted twice and then excluded from the experiment. However, if they responded later, qualified as a final participant (based on self-regulatory and locus of control demographic survey questions), and completed all pre-experiment requirements, they were welcome to still participate in the experiment.

16. The researcher sent a response email (Appendix P) as she received signed Adult Informed Consent Documents (Appendix N). In the email, she asked participants to confirm receipt of the email and provide their time/date availability to schedule the initial meeting. Participants were given one week to email their availability.

17. The researcher emailed (Appendix Q) any participants who did not provide their initial meeting availability within three days.

18. Participants were given one week (from the date received) to email their meeting availability.

19. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram* posts.

20. Throughout the participant recruiting process, nonresponsive participants were contacted twice and then excluded from the experiment. However, if they responded later, qualified as a final participant (based on self-regulatory and locus

of control demographic survey questions), and completed all pre-experiment requirements, they were welcome to still participate in the experiment.

21. The researcher sent a response email (Appendix R) to participants who confirmed their availability. She asked them to confirm receipt of email and requested that they complete and email back the attached Meeting Platform Document (Appendix S) in one week.

22. The researcher emailed (Appendix T) any participants who did not email their completed Meeting Platform Document (Appendix S) within three days.

23. Participants were given one week (from the date received) to email their completed Meeting Platform Document (Appendix S).

24. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram* posts (Appendix F).

25. Throughout the participant recruiting process, nonresponsive participants were contacted twice and then excluded from the experiment. However, if they responded later, qualified as a final participant (based on self-regulatory and locus of control demographic survey questions), and completed all pre-experiment requirements, they were welcome to still participate in the experiment.

26. The researcher scheduled initial meetings (Appendix U) per completed Meeting Platform Document (Appendix S) requests. The meeting went over participant role and expectations. The meeting agenda (Appendix W) was included in the invitation (Appendix U) and group program (if they already requested one) (Appendices A-D).

27. The researcher emailed (Appendix X) any participants who did not accept the meeting invitation (Appendix U) within three days.

28. The researcher still attended non-accepted meetings. However, if participants did not attend, they were contacted twice to reschedule and then disqualified.

29. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram* posts (Appendix F).

30. Throughout the participant recruiting process, nonresponsive participants were contacted twice and then excluded from the experiment. However, if they responded later, qualified as a final participant (based on self-regulatory and locus of control demographic survey questions), and completed all pre-experiment requirements, they were welcome to still participate in the experiment.

31. During the initial meeting, the researcher reviewed the self-monitoring checklist (Appendix Y), each group program (unless the participant already made a group selection) (Appendices A-D), the self-efficacy assessment (Appendix Z), and future communication. The researcher had talking points (Appendix V) prepared for each topic.

32. The researcher emailed the self-efficacy assessment (Appendix Z) via *Qualtrics* to participants to complete. They were asked to confirm receipt of the email and complete the assessment (Appendix Z) in one week. The assessment (Appendix Z) was administered pre- and post-experiment via *Qualtrics* to measure self-efficacy changes.

33. The researcher emailed (Appendix AA) any participants who did not complete the assessment (Appendix Z) within three days.

34. Participants were given one week (from the date received) to complete the assessment (Appendix Z).

35. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram* posts (Appendix F).

36. Throughout the participant recruiting process, nonresponsive participants were contacted twice and then excluded from the experiment. However, if they responded later, qualified as a final participant (based on self-regulatory and locus of control demographic survey questions), and completed all pre-experiment requirements, they were welcome to still participate in the experiment.

37. The researcher sent a response email (Appendix BB) to participants who completed their self-efficacy assessment. She asked the participant to confirm receipt of email and attached their group program (Appendices A-D). Participants were encouraged to contact the researcher with questions.

38. Once participants were assigned a group program (Appendices A-D), they were asked to begin their program (Appendices A-D) within one to seven days.

39. The researcher finalized three groups (Appendices A-D): Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A; a minimum of five anonymous participants who used the researcher's *The Self-Directed Goal Theory* program to improve self-efficacy), Experimental Group 2 (Appendices B and C; a minimum of five anonymous participants who used the *Manifest Anything You Want in 30 Days* (Emanuele,

2013) guided, goal-setting program to improve self-efficacy), and Control Group 3 (Appendix D; a minimum of five anonymous participants who tried to improve self-efficacy on their own—without using any assigned programs). Individual group (Appendices A-D) participants were selected by participant request or at random.

40. Because of the nature of each goal-setting program (Appendices A-D), Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A) lasted 60 days and Experimental Group 2 (Appendices B and C) lasted 30 days. The experiment lasted a total of eight weeks.

41. Once all participants met pre-experiment requirements, they began the experiment on their preferred start dates.

42. At Week 1.5, the researcher followed up with Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A) participants via email (Appendix CC) to evaluate progress of this goal-planning, answer questions, and make suggestions. Participants were not required to respond; this was simply a touch base.

43. At Week 2, the researcher followed up with all participants via email (Appendix CC) to evaluate progress, answer questions, and make suggestions. Participants were not required to respond; this was simply a touch base.

44. At Week 2, the researcher followed up with Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A) participants via email (Appendix DD) to confirm that they started the program's action phase, answer questions, and make suggestions. Participants were not required to respond; this was simply a touch base.

45. At Week 4, (the 30-day mark), the researcher sent an email (Appendix EE) to Experimental Group 2 (Appendices B and C) participants. In the email (Appendix EE), she acknowledged program completion and asked the participants to provide their time/date availability to schedule a final interview to ask questions and get additional information. Participants were given one week to email their availability.

46. The researcher emailed (Appendix FF) any Experimental Group 2 (Appendices B and C) participants who did not provide their final interview availability within three days.

47. Participants were given one week (from the date received) to email their meeting availability.

48. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram* posts (Appendix F).

49. Throughout the participant recruiting process, nonresponsive participants were contacted twice and then excluded from the experiment. However, if they responded later, qualified as a final participant (based on self-regulatory and locus of control demographic survey questions), and completed all pre-experiment requirements, they were welcome to still participate in the experiment.

50. The researcher sent a response email (Appendix R) to Experimental Group 2 (Appendices B and C) participants who confirmed their availability. She asked the participant to confirm receipt of email and requested that they complete and email back the attached Meeting Platform Document (Appendix S) in one week.

51. The researcher emailed (Appendix T) any participants who did not email their completed Meeting Platform Document (Appendix S) within three days.

52. Participants were given one week (from the date received) to email their completed Meeting Platform Document (Appendix S).

53. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram* posts (Appendix F).

54. Throughout the participant recruiting process, nonresponsive participants were contacted twice and then excluded from the experiment. However, if they responded later, qualified as a final participant (based on self-regulatory and locus of control demographic survey questions), and completed all pre-experiment requirements, they were welcome to still participate in the experiment.

55. The researcher scheduled final interviews per completed Meeting Platform Document (Appendix S) requests. The meeting went over post-experiment expectations. The meeting agenda (Appendix GG) was included in the invitation (Appendix U).

56. The researcher emailed (Appendix Q) any participants who did not accept the meeting invitation (Appendix U) within three days.

57. The researcher still attended non-accepted meetings. However, if participants did not attend, they were contacted twice and then disqualified.

58. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram* posts (Appendix F).

59. Throughout the participant recruiting process, nonresponsive participants were contacted twice and then excluded from the experiment. However, if they responded later, qualified as a final participant (based on self-regulatory and locus of control demographic survey questions), and completed all pre-experiment requirements, they were welcome to still participate in the experiment.

60. During the final interview, the researcher asked interview questions, reviewed self-monitoring checklists (Appendix Y), talked about the second self-efficacy assessment (Appendix Z), potential tools, and raffle. The researcher had talking points (Appendix HH) prepared for each topic.

61. The researcher emailed the second self-efficacy assessment (Appendix Z) via *Qualtrics* to Experimental Group 2 (Appendices B and C) participants to complete. They were asked to confirm receipt of the email and complete the assessment (Appendix Z) in one week. The second assessment (Appendix Z) was administered post-experiment to measure self-efficacy changes.

62. The researcher emailed (Appendix AA) any Experimental Group 2 (Appendices B and C) participants who did not complete the second assessment (Appendix Z) within three days.

63. Experimental Group 2 (Appendices B and C) participants were given one week (from the date received) to complete the assessment (Appendix Z).

64. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram* posts (Appendix F).

65. Throughout the participant recruiting process, nonresponsive participants were contacted twice and then excluded from the experiment. However, if they responded later, qualified as a final participant (based on self-regulatory and locus of control demographic survey questions), and completed all pre-experiment requirements, they were welcome to still participate in the experiment.

66. The researcher sent a response email (Appendix LL) to Experimental Group 2 Appendices B and C) participants who completed their self-efficacy assessment (Appendix Z). She asked the participants to confirm receipt of email, went over assessment (Appendix Z) comparisons, provided guidance tools (attaching the 1-page Overcoming Reference Tool) (Appendix JJ), and went over raffle information. The 1-page Overcoming Reference Tool (Appendix JJ) provided guidance on overcoming missed goals and improving self-efficacy. Participants were encouraged to contact the researcher with questions and thanked for their participation, dedication, and time.

67. At Week 4, the researcher followed up with participants in Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A) and Control Group 3 (Appendix D) via email (Appendix CC) to evaluate progress, answer questions, and make suggestions. Participants were not required to respond; this was simply a touch base.

68. At Week 6, the researcher followed up with participants in Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A) and Control Group 3 (Appendix D) via email (Appendix CC) to evaluate progress, answer questions, and make suggestions. Participants were not required to respond; the email was simply a touch base.

69. At Week 8, (the 60-day mark), the researcher sent an email (Appendix EE) to Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A) and Control Group 3 (Appendix D) participants.   In the email (Appendix EE), she acknowledged program completion and asked the participant to provide their time/date availability to schedule a final interview to ask questions and get additional information. Participants were given one week to email their availability.

70. The researcher emailed (Appendix Q) any Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A) and Control Group (Appendix D) participants who did not provide their final interview availability within three days.

71. Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A) and Control Group 3 (Appendix D) participants were given one week (from the date received) to email their meeting availability.

72. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram* posts (Appendix F).

73. Throughout the participant recruiting process, nonresponsive participants were contacted twice and then excluded from the experiment. However, if they responded later, qualified as a final participant (based on self-regulatory and locus of control demographic survey questions), and completed all pre-experiment requirements, they were welcome to still participate in the experiment.

74. The researcher sent a response email (Appendix R) to Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A) and Control Group 3 (Appendix D) participants who confirmed their availability. She asked the participant to confirm receipt of email and

requested that they complete and email back the attached Meeting Platform

Document (Appendix S) in one week.

75. The researcher emailed (Appendix T) any Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A)

and Control Group 3 (Appendix D) participants who did not email their

completed Meeting Platform Document (Appendix S) within three days.

76. Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A) and Control Group 3 (Appendix D)

participants were given one week (from the date received) to email their

completed Meeting Platform Document (Appendix S).

77. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional

participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram*

posts (Appendix F).

78. Throughout the participant recruiting process, nonresponsive participants were

contacted twice and then excluded from the experiment. However, if they

responded later, qualified as a final participant (based on self-regulatory and locus

of control demographic survey questions), and completed all pre-experiment

requirements, they were welcome to still participate in the experiment.

79. The researcher scheduled final interviews per completed Meeting Platform

Document (Appendix S) requests. The meeting went over post-experiment

expectations. The meeting agenda (Appendix GG) was included in the invitation

(Appendix U).

80. The researcher emailed (Appendix X) any Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A)

and Control Group 3 (Appendix D) participants who did not accept the meeting

invitation (Appendix U) within three days.

81. The researcher still attended non-accepted meetings. However, if participants did not attend, they were contacted twice to reschedule and then disqualified.

82. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram* posts (Appendix F).

83. Throughout the participant recruiting process, nonresponsive participants were contacted twice and then excluded from the experiment. However, if they responded later, qualified as a final participant (based on self-regulatory and locus of control demographic survey questions), and completed all pre-experiment requirements, they were welcome to still participate in the experiment.

84. During the final interviews, the researcher asked interview questions, reviewed self-monitoring checklists, talked about the second self-efficacy assessment, potential tools, and raffle. The researcher had talking points (Appendix HH) prepared for each topic.

85. The researcher emailed the second self-efficacy assessment (Appendix Z) via Qualtrics to Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A) and Control Group 3 (Appendix D) participants to complete. They were asked to confirm receipt of the email and complete the assessment (Appendix Z) in one week. The second assessment (Appendix Z) was administered post-experiment to measure self-efficacy changes.

86. The researcher emailed (Appendix AA) any Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A) and Control Group 3 (Appendix D) participants who did not complete the second assessment (Appendix Z) within three days.

87. Experimental Group 1 (Appendix A) and Control Group 3 (Appendix D)

    participants were given one week (from the date received) to complete the

    assessment (Appendix Z).

88. The final sample included a minimum of 15 participants. If additional

    participants were needed, the researcher made additional *Facebook/Instagram*

    posts (Appendix F).

89. Throughout the participant recruiting process, nonresponsive participants were

    contacted twice and then excluded from the experiment. However, if they

    responded later, qualified as a final participant (based on self-regulatory and locus

    of control demographic survey questions), and completed all pre-experiment

    requirements, they were welcome to still participate in the experiment.

90. The researcher sent a response email (Appendix LL) to Experimental Group 1

    (Appendix A) and Control Group 3 (Appendix D) participants who completed

    their self-efficacy assessment (Appendix Z). She asked the participants to

    confirm receipt of email, went over assessment (Appendix Z) comparisons,

    provided guidance tools (attaching the 1-page Overcoming Reference Tool)

    (Appendix JJ), and went over raffle information. The 1-page Overcoming

    Reference Tool (Appendix JJ) provided guidance on overcoming missed goals

    and improving self-efficacy. Participants were encouraged to contact the

    researcher with questions and thanked for their participation, dedication, and time.

91. All participants who expressed interest in the experiment (and took the

    demographic survey) were entered into a $50 gift card raffle. Participant raffle

    tickets were identified by participants' Qualtrics four-digit identification numbers

and drawn by a third party. The drawing took place during Week 9, post-experiment (approximately one week after experiment completion for all participants).

92. The winning participant was contacted via email (Appendix KK) regarding their winning raffle. Non-winning raffle participants were not contacted. The researcher purchased a virtual $50 Visa gift card and emailed it to the winning participant. She asked the winning participant to confirm receipt.

Data Analysis

This mixed methods study focused primarily on qualitative variables. All qualitative data analyses (content, narrative, discourse, framework, and grounded theory) were used when analyzing experiment data. Content and narrative analyses categorized behavioral data and dug into the context of each participant's experience during the final interview. Discourse analysis interpreted completed group documents. Framework analysis identified themes/patterns within each research instrument; this was achieved by thematic coding to identify text frequency and deductive coding to assign predefined codes to data (Medelyan, 2021, paras. 7-27). The grounded theory method investigated the cogency of the researcher's original *Self-Directed Goal Theory*.

The researcher used hypothesis testing to statistically analyze pre- and post-experiment self-efficacy assessment results. Hypothesis testing proves or disproves the hypotheses by exposing connections between the independent and dependent variables (Calvello, 2020, paras. 33-37).

Ethical Considerations

This experimental study reticulated two integral fields: Education and Psychology. Education depicts the macro perspective, spurring more career opportunities, boosting financial status, developing skills, improving the economy, enhancing prosperity and happiness, promoting community involvement, modernizing society, promoting diversity, and breeding empowerment (10 Benefits Showing Why Education Is Important to Our Society, 2020, paras. 2-11). Psychology portrays the micro perspective, explaining why an individual behaves a certain way, makes certain decisions, handles stress, internalizes their past, approaches relationships, views self, and communicates with others (The Importance of Psychology in Today's World, 2018, paras. 1-5). Accordingly, ethical considerations were vital because they shaped the narrow and broad landscape. Outside of the mandatory Adult Informed Consent Form (Appendix N), the researcher made the following ethical considerations for participants:

- Ensuring that the Adult Informed Consent Form (Appendix N) was completed.

- Asking participants if they had questions regarding the Adult Informed Consent Form (Appendix N).

- Reiterating voluntary participation and optional withdrawal.

- Providing multiple forms of researcher contact for participant questions/inquiries.

- Asking a third party to pull tickets for the raffle drawing.

- Informing participants about potential experiment risks.

- Offering a raffle incentive to all participants who completed the demographic survey (whether they completed the experiment or not).

- Offering "Prefer Not to Say" multiple choice responses on all demographic survey questions.

- Providing detailed instructions on all group documents.

- Utilizing Qualtrics for survey/assessment completion and participant four-digit code identification.

- Typing participant meeting notes as opposed to recording.

- Providing the dissertation topic and purpose in all experiment communications.

- Allowing participants to select their own groups (when available).

- Emailing individual pre-and post-assessment result comparisons to participants.

- Asking subjective and unbiased questions during the final interview.

Summary

The methodology explains why researchers want to conduct research and how they plan to do it (Why do you need a methodology, n.d., para. 2). In this study, the methodology restated the problem and purpose, independent and dependent variables, research questions, and hypotheses. The research design established its mixed methods characteristics and broke down the researcher's theoretical formula for her *Self-Directed Goal Theory*. The instrument identified data collection methods for the qualitative and quantitative variables. The population and sample revealed the entire population size and targeted study sample size; it also provided the participants' geographical location and study timing. The data collection framed the experimental process and sequence of events. The data analysis section described the researcher's qualitative and quantitative analyses actions. The researcher also reflected on participant ethical considerations from a micro and macro perspective.

Chapter Three connected the study's problem and purpose to the data collected. It revealed raw data that either supported or rejected the research questions and hypotheses.

Chapter Four: Analysis

Introduction

Goal pursuit, with respect to personal development, is a volatile process. According to a Deci and Ryan (2000) journal article, "a critical issue in the effects of goal pursuit and attainment concerns the degree to which people are able to satisfy their basic psychological needs as they pursue and attain their valued outcomes" (p. 227). Therefore, an unequivocal recipe for goal pursuit is essential. The data drawn from this experimental study helped the researcher fill this empty space. This study investigated whether personal development goal-setting requires self-directedness to boost self-efficacy. The researcher dug deep to expose the precise ingredients for maximum self-efficacy and potential goal attainment. Her experiment utilized one quantitative data collection method (pre- and post-experiment assessments) and four qualitative data collection methods (demographic surveys, self-monitoring checklists, interviews, and group documents). These instruments were utilized to describe the sample distribution, evaluate participant actions, promote participant accountability, gauge the participant experience, provide detail on their goal journeys, and measure potential self-efficacy changes.

Data and Analysis

The following subtopics outlined each research instrument and corresponding raw data. Contextual information and data visualization is used to communicate experimental results. Within each instrument, the researcher included expanding graphs and charts to build in data layers and clarify complex data. Instruments were listed in their order of experiment occurrence.

Demographical Survey

Survey questions "provide context for the collected survey data" (Allen, 2017, para. 1), allowing the researcher to illustrate her study sample and better examine data (para. 1). The demographical survey was composed of 11 questions. It was completed by 29 potential participants via *Qualtrics*. None of the potential participants selected the "Prefer not to say" option when responding to survey questions; however, the researcher noted under the children subtopic that one potential participant did not disclose (skipped the question). The following demographical data were informed and exported from *Qualtrics*.

Experiment Completion. Of the 29 completed surveys, 10 participants completed the entire experiment. Fifteen potential participants did not complete the experiment and four were disqualified. Surprisingly, all disqualified participants answered "No" to the locus of control question (Question 10), indicating an external locus of control; none of the 29 potential participants answered "No" to the self-regulation question, suggesting solid self-regulatory skills (Question 11). The pie chart, Figure 1**,** presented a visual representation of percentage-based experiment completion.

Figure 1

Experiment Completion
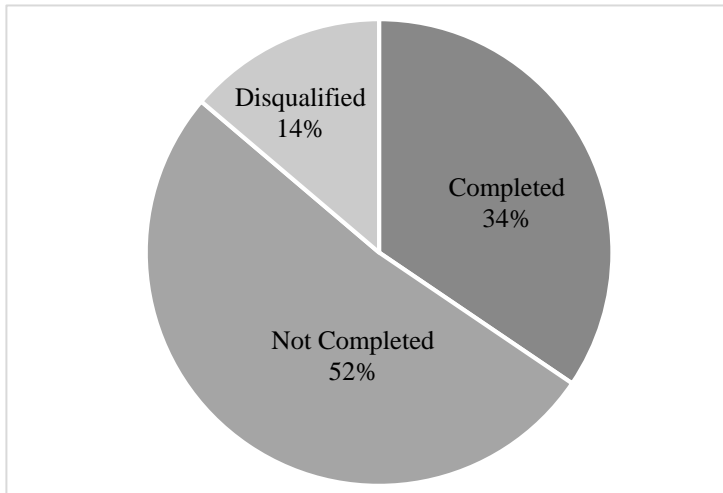
Survey Time Stamps. Out of 29 responses, 12 potential participants finished the survey in less than a minute, 10 finished in one minute, three finished in two minutes, one finished in four minutes, one finished in eight minutes, one finished in 10 minutes, and one finished in two hours and three minutes. The pie chart, in Figure 2, presented a visual representation of percentage-based survey time stamps.

Figure 2

Survey Time Stamps
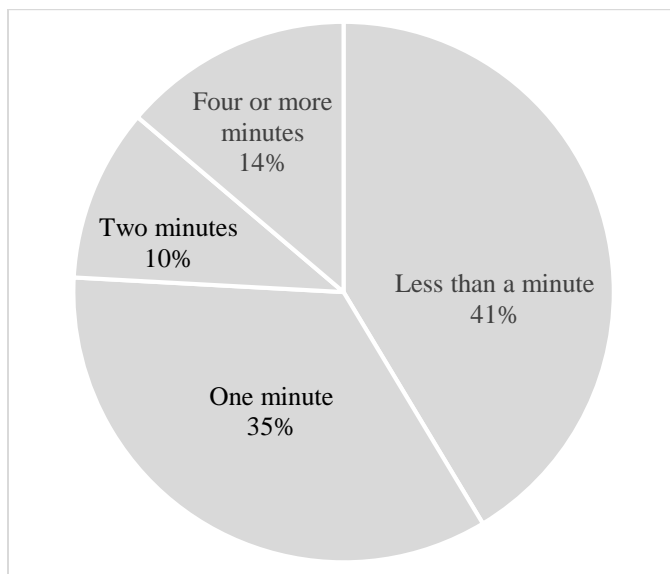
Survey Time Stamps vs. Experiment Completion. Out of 12 potential participants who finished the survey in less than a minute, five completed the experiment and seven did not. Of the 10 who finished in one minute, three were disqualified, three completed the experiment, and four did not. Of the three who finished the survey in two minutes, one completed the experiment, one did not complete the entire experiment, and one was disqualified. The three potential participants who finished the survey in four minutes, eight minutes, 10 minutes, and two hours and three minutes did not complete the entire experiment.

Gender. Out of 29 responses, 23 were women and six were men. None of the potential participants selected the "Other" response. The pie chart in Figure 3 presented a visual representation of percentage-based gender.

Figure 3

Gender
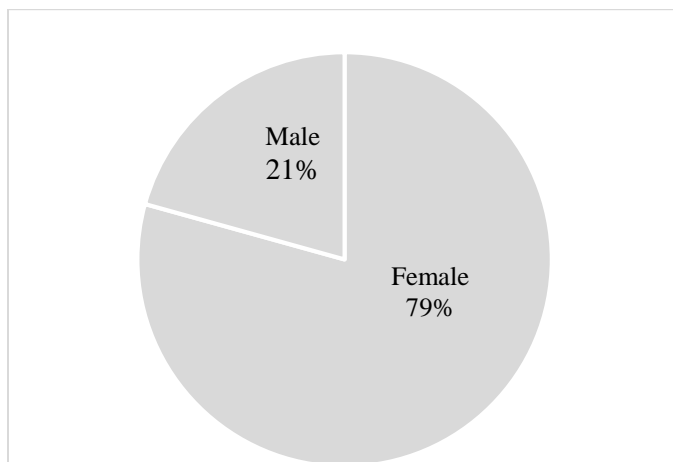
   Gender vs. Experiment Completion. Out of 29 responses, four women were

disqualified. Eight women and one man completed the experiment, and five men and 11

women did not.

   Gender vs. Survey Time Stamps. Out of 29 responses, four women finished the

survey in less than one minute. Eleven women and three men finished the survey in one

minute. Three women and two men finished the survey in two minutes. Two women

finished the survey in three minutes. One woman finished the survey in four minutes and

another woman in seven minutes. One man finished the survey in 10 minutes and one

woman finished in two hours and three minutes.

   Age. Out of 29 responses, four potential participants were between the ages of 18

and 24, four were between the ages of 25 and 34, 16 were between the ages of 35 and 44,

two were between the ages of 45 and 54, and three were between the ages of 55 and 64.

None of the potential participants selected the "65+" response. The pie chart in Figure 4

presented a visual representation of percentage-based ages.

Figure 4

Age
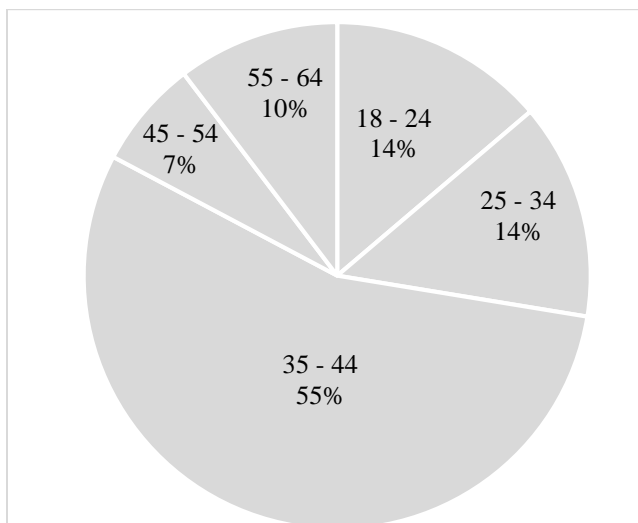
  Age vs. Experiment Completion. Out of 29 responses, two potential participants

between the ages of 18 and 24 completed the experiment and two did not. One potential

participant between the ages of 25 and 34 was disqualified and three did not complete the

entire experiment. Three potential participants between the ages of 35 and 44 were

disqualified, six completed the experiment, and seven did not. Two potential participants

between the ages of 45 and 54 did not complete the entire experiment. Two potential

participants between the ages of 55 and 64 completed the experiment and one did not.

  Age vs. Survey Time Stamps. Out of 29 responses, two potential participants

between the ages of 18 and 24, two between the ages of 25 and 34, and eight between the

ages of 35 and 44 finished the survey in less than one minute. One potential participant

between the ages of 25 and 34, four between the ages of 35 and 44, two between the ages

of 45 and 54, and three between the ages of 55 and 64 finished the survey in one minute.

Three potential participants between the ages of 35 and 44 finished the survey in two

minutes. One potential participant between the ages of 18 and 24 finished the survey in

four minutes. One potential participant between the ages of 18 and 24 finished the survey in eight minutes. One potential participant between the ages of 25 and 34 finished the survey in 10 minutes. One potential participant between the ages of 35 and 44 finished the survey in two hours and three minutes.

Age vs. Gender. Out of 29 responses, four potential participants between the ages of 18 and 24 were women. One man and three women were between the ages of 25 and 34. Two men and 14 women were between the ages of 35 and 44. One man and one woman were between the ages of 45 and 54. One woman and two men were between the ages of 55 and 64.

Education. Out of 29 responses, five potential participants completed high school or equivalent education, two completed trade school, six completed their bachelor's degree, 15 completed their master's degree, and one completed a doctoral program. The pie chart in Figure 5 presented a visual representation of percentage-based education.

Figure 5

Education
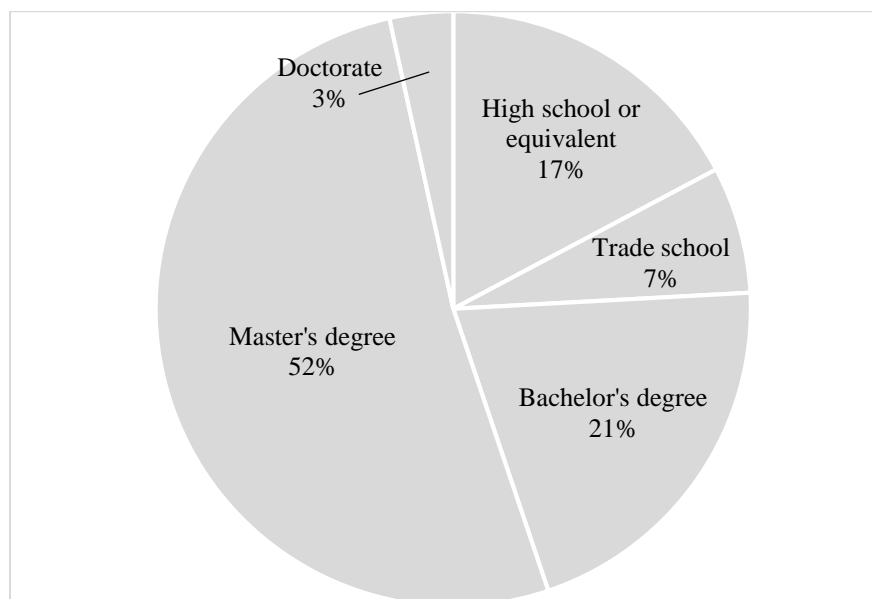
   Education vs. Experiment Completion. Out of 29 responses, two high school or equivalent potential participants completed the experiment and three did not. One trade school potential participant completed the experiment, and one did not. One bachelor-degreed potential participant was disqualified, two completed the experiment, and three did not. Three master-degreed potential participants were disqualified, five completed the experiment, and seven did not. One potential participant finished the doctoral program and did not complete the entire experiment.

   Education vs. Survey Time Stamps. Out of 29 responses, two high school or equivalent educated, one bachelor-degreed, and one master-degreed potential participants finished the survey in less than a minute. Two high school or equivalent educated, one trade school educated, three bachelor-degreed, and eight master-degreed potential participants finished the survey in one minute. One trade school educated, one bachelor-degreed, and three master-degreed potential participants finished the survey in two

minutes. Two master-degreed potential participants finished the survey in three minutes. One bachelor-degreed potential participant finished the survey in four minutes. One high school or equivalent potential participant finished the survey in seven minutes. One master-degreed potential participant finished the survey in 10 minutes. One potential participant completed the doctoral program and finished the survey in two hours and three minutes.

Education vs. Gender. Out of 23 women, four completed high school or equivalent education, two completed trade school, four completed their bachelor's degree, 12 completed their master's degree, and one completed the doctoral program. Out of six men, one completed high school or equivalent education, two completed their bachelor's degree, and three completed their master's degree.

Education vs. Age. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 18 and 24, two were high school or equivalent educated and two were bachelor-degreed. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 25 and 34, one was high school or equivalent educated and three were master-degreed. Out of 16 potential participants between the ages of 35 and 44, two completed high school or equivalent education, two completed trade school, three completed their bachelor's degree, eight completed their master's degree, and one completed the doctoral program. Out of two potential participants between the ages of 45 and 54, one completed the bachelor's program, and one completed the master's program. Out of three potential participants between the ages of 55 and 64, three completed their master's degree.

Ethnicity. Out of 29 responses, one potential participant was Asian, 17 were Black/African American, eight were Caucasian, two were Hispanic or Latino, and one

was Two or more ethnicities. None of the potential participants selected the "Native American or Pacific Islander" or "Other/Unknown" responses. The pie chart in Figure 6 presented a visual representation of percentage-based ethnicities.

Figure 6

Ethnicity
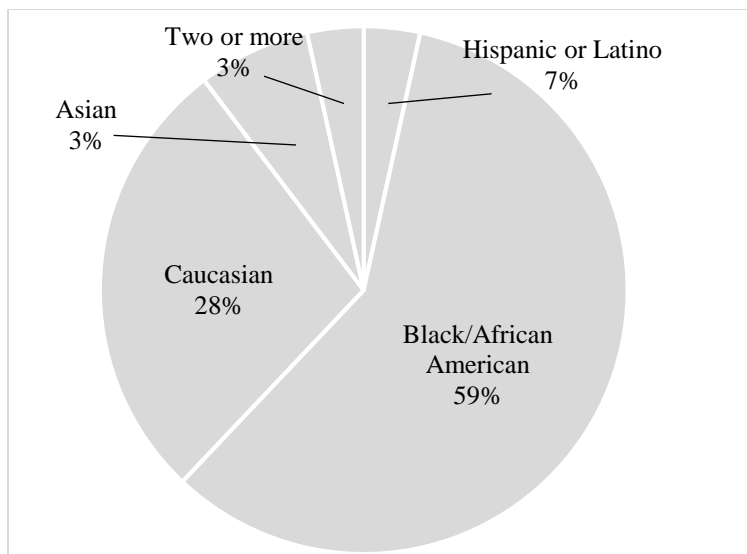
Ethnicity vs. Experiment Completion. Out of 29 responses, one Asian potential participant did not complete the entire experiment. Four Black/African American potential participants completed the experiment, four were disqualified, and nine did not complete the entire experiment. Three Caucasian potential participants completed the experiment and five did not. Two Hispanic or Latino potential participants completed the experiment. One potential participant of Two or more ethnicities did not complete the entire experiment.

Ethnicity vs. Survey Time Stamps. Out of 29 responses, seven Black/African American, three Caucasian, and two Hispanic or Latino potential participants finished the survey in less than a minute. Five Black/African American and five Caucasian potential

participants finished the survey in one minute. Three Black/African American potential participants finished the survey in two minutes. One Black/African American potential participant finished the survey in four minutes. One Black/African American potential participant finished the survey in eight minutes. One Asian potential participant finished the survey in 10 minutes. One potential participant of Two or more ethnicities finished the survey in two hours and three minutes.

Ethnicity vs. Gender. Out of 23 women, 16 were Black/African American, four were Caucasian, two were Hispanic or Latino, and one potential participant was Two or more ethnicities. Out of six men, one was Asian, one was Black/African American, and four were Caucasian.

Ethnicity vs. Age. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 18 and 24, one was Hispanic or Latino, one was Caucasian, and two were Black/African American. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 25 and 34, one was Asian and three were Black/African American. Out of 16 potential participants between the ages of 35 and 44, 11 were Black/African American, three were Caucasian, one was Hispanic or Latino, and one was Two or more ethnicities. Out of two potential participants between the ages of 45 and 54, one was Caucasian, and one was Black/African American. Three potential participants were between the ages of 55 and 64 were Caucasian.

Ethnicity vs. Education. One Asian potential participant completed a master's degree. Out of 17 Black/African American potential participants, three completed high school or equivalent education, three completed their bachelor's degree, and 11 completed their master's degree. Out of eight Caucasian potential participants, one

completed high school or equivalent education, one completed trade school, three

completed their bachelor's degree, and three completed their master's degree. Out of two

Hispanic or Latino potential participants, one completed high school or equivalent

education and one completed trade school. One potential participant of two or more

ethnicities completed the doctoral program.

Employment Status. Out of 29 responses, two potential participants were

unemployed (currently looking for work), four were students, three were self-employed,

three were employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), and 17 were employed full-

time (40+ hours per week). None of the potential participants selected the "Unemployed

(not currently looking for work)", "Retired", or "Unable to work" options. The pie chart

in Figure 7 presented a visual representation of percentage-based employment status.

Figure 7

Employment Status
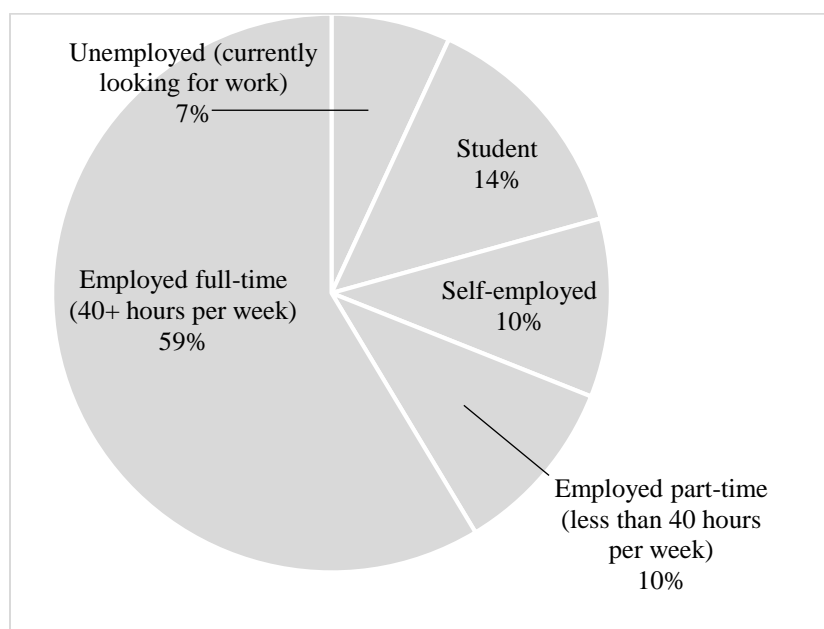
Employment Status vs. Experiment Completion. Out of the four disqualified

potential participants, one was employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week) and

three were employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of 10 potential participants who completed the experiment, one was self-employed, one was employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), two were students, and six were employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of 16 potential participants who did not complete the entire experiment, one was employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), two were unemployed (currently looking for work), two were students, two were self-employed, and nine were employed full-time (40+ hours per week).

Employment Status vs. Survey Time Stamps. Out of 12 potential participants who finished the survey in less than one minute, one was unemployed (currently looking for work), one was a student, one was employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), two were self-employed, and seven were employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of 10 potential participants who finished the survey in one minute, one was a student, one was self-employed, two were employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), and six were employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of three potential participants who finished the survey in two minutes, all were employed full-time (40+ hours per week). One student finished the survey in four minutes. One potential participant was unemployed (currently looking for work) and finished the survey in eight minutes. One potential participant was employed full-time (40+ hours per week) and finished the survey in 10 minutes. One student finished the survey in two hours and three minutes.

Employment Status vs. Gender. Out of 23 women, two were unemployed (currently looking for work), three were students, three were self-employed, two were employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), and 13 were employed full-time (40+

hours per week). Out of six men, one was a student, one was employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), and four were employed full-time (40+ hours per week).

Employment Status vs. Age. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 18 and 24, one was unemployed (currently looking for work), two were students, and one was employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of four potential participants between the ages of 25 and 34, one was unemployed (currently looking for work), one was self-employed, and two were employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of 16 potential participants between the ages of 35 and 44, one was a student, one was self-employed, two were employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), and 12 were employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of two potential participants between the ages of 45 and 54, one was self-employed, and one was employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of three potential participants between the ages of 55 and 64, one was a student, one was employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), and one was employed full-time (40+ hours per week).

Employment Status vs. Education. Out of potential participants with high school or equivalent education, two were unemployed (currently looking for work), one was a student, and two were employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of two potential participants who completed trade school, one was self-employed, and one was employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of six potential participants who completed their bachelor's degree, one was a student, two were employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), and three were employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of 15 potential participants who completed their master's degree, one was a student, two were self-employed, one was employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), and 11 were

employed full-time (40+ hours per week). One potential participant was a doctoral student.

Employment Status vs. Ethnicity. One Asian potential participant was employed full-time 40+ hours per week). Out of 17 Black/African American potential participants, two were unemployed (currently looking for work), one was a student, two were self-employed, one was employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), and 11 were employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of eight Caucasian potential participants, one was a student, two were employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), and five were employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of two Hispanic or Latino potential participants, one was a student, and the other was self-employed. One potential participant of two or more ethnicities was a doctoral student.

Location. Out of 29 responses, two resided in California, four in Georgia, three in Illinois, two in Maryland, five in Missouri, three in Tennessee, and two in Texas. Singular potential participants resided in Ohio, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Arizona, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. During an analytical review, the researcher noticed one outlier outside of the United States criteria—a singular potential participant who resided in Vancouver, Canada. The bar graph in Figure 8 presented a visual representation of number-based location.

Figure 8

Location
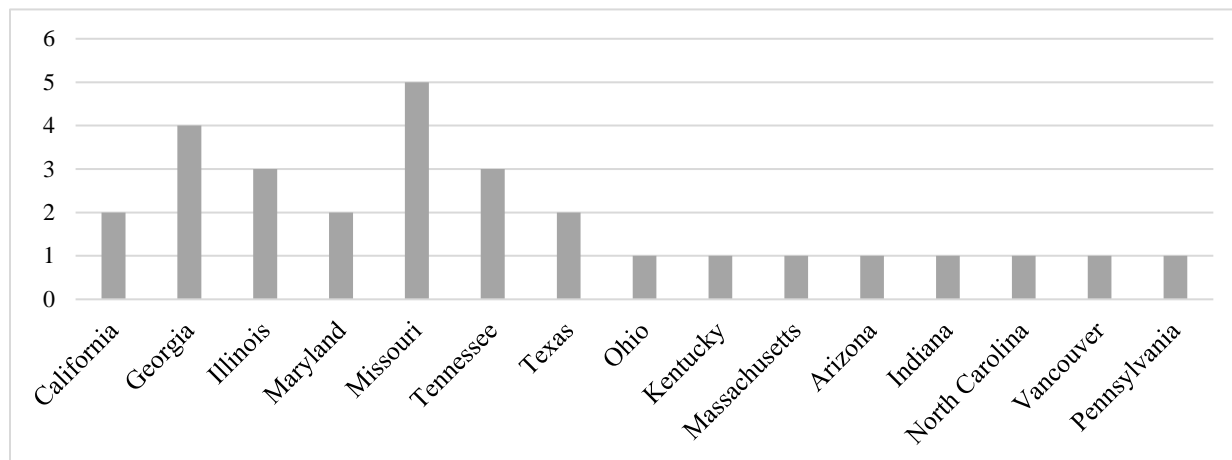
Location vs. Experiment Completion. Out of the four disqualified potential

participants, one resided in Maryland, one in Missouri and two in Illinois. Out of 10

potential participants who completed the experiment, one resided in Arizona, one in

Kentucky, one in Georgia, one in Indiana, one in Tennessee, one in Texas, two in

California, and two in Missouri. Out of 16 who did not complete the entire experiment,

one resided in Illinois, one in Indiana, one in Maryland, one in Massachusetts, one in

North Carolina, one in Ohio, one in Pennsylvania, one in Texas, one in Vancouver, two

in Tennessee, two in Missouri, and three in Georgia.

Location vs. Survey Time Stamps. Out of 12 potential participants who finished

the survey in less than a minute, one resided in Arizona, one in Illinois, one in Maryland,

one in Ohio, two in California, two in Tennessee, and four in Georgia. Out of 10 potential

participants who finished the survey in one minute, one resided in Illinois, one in

Kentucky, one in Maryland, one in Massachusetts, one in North Carolina, one in

Tennessee, and four in Missouri. Out of three potential participants who finished the survey in two minutes, one resided in Illinois, one in Texas, and one in Indiana. A Missourian potential participant finished the survey in four minutes. A Texan potential participant finished the survey in eight minutes. A Pennsylvanian potential participant finished the survey in 10 minutes. One potential participant finished the survey in two hours and three minutes and resided in Vancouver.

Location vs. Gender. Out of 23 women, one resided in Arizona, one in Indiana, one in Kentucky, one in Massachusetts, one in North Carolina, one in Ohio, one in Tennessee, one in Vancouver, two in California, two in Illinois, two in Maryland, two in Texas, three in Missouri and four in Georgia. Out of six men, one resided in Pennsylvania, one in Illinois, two in Missouri, and two in Tennessee.

Location vs. Age. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 18 and 24, one resided in Georgia, one in Maryland, one in Missouri, and one in Texas. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 25 and 34, one resided in Georgia, one in Maryland, one in Ohio, and one in Pennsylvania. Out of 16 potential participants between the ages of 35 and 44, one resided in Arizona, one in Indiana, one in Kentucky, one in Massachusetts, one in Missouri, one in Texas, one in Vancouver, two in California, two in Georgia, two in Tennessee and, three in Illinois. Out of two potential participants between the ages of 45 and 54, one resided in North Carolina and one in Tennessee. Out of three potential participants between the ages of 55 and 64, all resided in Missouri.

Location vs. Education. Out of five potential participants who completed high school or equivalent education, one resided in Arizona, one in Georgia, one in Ohio, one in Tennessee, and one in Texas. Out of two potential participants who completed trade

school, one resided in California and one in Massachusetts. Out of six potential

participants who completed their bachelor's degree, one resided in Maryland, one in

Missouri, two in Illinois, and two in Tennessee. Out of 15 potential participants who

completed their master's degree, one resided in California, one in Illinois, one in Indiana,

one in Kentucky, one in Maryland, one in North Carolina, one in Pennsylvania, one in

Texas, three in Georgia, and four in Missouri. One doctoral potential participant resided

in Vancouver.

Location vs. Ethnicity. One Asian potential participant resided in Pennsylvania.

Out of 17 Black/African American potential participants, one resided in California, one in

Indiana, one in Kentucky, one in Maryland, one in North Carolina, one in Ohio, two in

Illinois, two in Missouri, two in Tennessee, two in Texas, and three in Georgia. Out of

eight Caucasian potential participants, one resided in Arizona, one in Illinois, one in

Maryland, one in Massachusetts, one in Tennessee, and three in Missouri. Out of two

Hispanic or Latino potential participants, one resided in California and the other in

Georgia. One potential participant of two or more ethnicities resided in Vancouver.

Location vs. Employment Status. Out of two unemployed (currently looking for

work) potential participants, one resided in Ohio and the other in Texas. Out of four

student potential participants, one resided in Georgia, one in Vancouver, and two in

Missouri. Out of three self-employed potential participants, one resided in California, one

in Georgia, and one in North Carolina. Out of three employed part-time (less than 40

hours per week) potential participants, one resided in Missouri and two in Illinois. Out of

17 potential participants employed full-time (40+ hours per week), one resided in

Arizona, one in California, one in Illinois, one in Indiana, one in Kentucky, one in

Massachusetts, one in Pennsylvania, one in Texas, two in Georgia, two in Maryland, two in Missouri, and three in Tennessee.

Marital Status. Out of 29 responses, 13 potential participants were single (never married), 10 were married, two were in a domestic partnership, and four were divorced. None of the potential participants selected the "Widowed" response. The pie chart in Figure 9 presented a visual representation of percentage-based marital status.

Figure 9

Marital Status
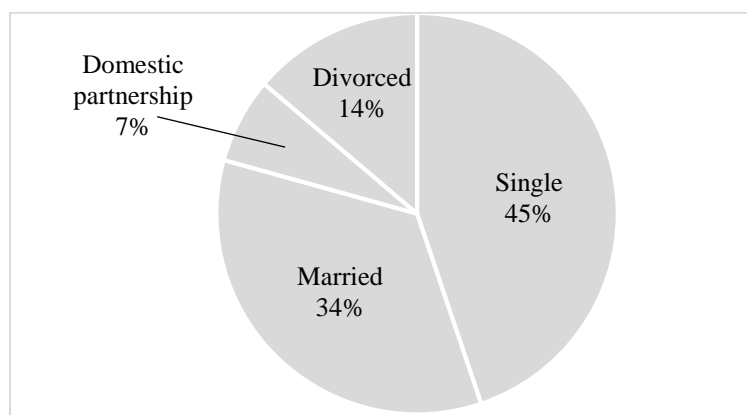
Marital Status vs. Experiment Completion. Out of the four disqualified potential participants, one was married and three were single (never married). Out of 10 potential participants who completed the experiment, two was divorced, two were in a domestic partnership, three were single (never married), and three were married. Out of 16 potential participants who did not complete the entire experiment, two were divorced, six were married, and eight were single (never married).

Marital Status vs. Survey Time Stamps. Out of 13 single potential participants, three finished the survey in less than a minute, six in one minute, one in two minutes, and three in four minutes or more minutes. Out of 10 married potential participants, five

finished the survey in one minute, two in two minutes, two in three minutes, and one in four or more minutes. Two potential participants in a domestic partnership finished the survey in one minute. Out of four divorced potential participants, one finished the survey in less than a minute, one in one minute, and two in two minutes.

Marital Status vs. Gender. Out of 23 women, 11 were single (never married), seven were married, one was in a domestic partnership, and four were divorced. Out of six men, two were single (never married), three were married, and one was in a domestic partnership.

Marital Status vs. Age. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 18 and 24, all were single. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 25 and 34, one was divorced and three were single. Out of 16 potential participants between the ages of 35 and 44, one was in a domestic partnership, three were divorced, five were single (never married), and seven were married. Out of two potential participants between the ages of 45 and 54, one was single (never married) and one was married. Out of three potential participants between the ages of 55 and 64, one was in a domestic partnership and two were married.

Marital Status vs. Education. Out of five potential participants with high school or equivalent education, one was married, one was in a domestic partnership, and three were single (never married). Out of two potential participants who completed trade school, one was married, and the other was divorced. Out of six potential participants who completed their bachelor's degree, two were married and four were single (never married). Out of 15 potential participants who completed their master's degree, one was in a domestic

partnership, three were divorced, five were married, and six were single (never married). One potential participant was a married doctoral student.

Marital Status vs. Ethnicity. One Asian potential participant was single (never married). Out of 17 Black/African American potential participants, three were divorced, five were married, and nine were single (never married). Out of eight Caucasian potential participants, one was divorced, two were in a domestic partnership, two were single (never married), and three were married. Out of two Hispanic or Latino potential participants, one was married, and the other was single (never married). One potential participant of two or more ethnicities was married.

Marital Status vs. Employment Status. Out of 13 single potential participants, one was self-employed, one was employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), two were unemployed (currently looking for work), two were students, and seven were employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of 10 married potential participants, one was a student, one was self-employed, two were employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), and six were employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of two potential participants in a domestic partnership, one was a student, and the other was employed full-time (40+ hours per week). Out of four divorced potential participants, one was self-employed and three were employed full-time (40+ hours per week).

Marital Status vs. Location. Out of 13 single potential participants, one resided in North Carolina, one in Ohio, one in Pennsylvania, one in Tennessee, one in Texas, two in Georgia, two in Illinois, two in Maryland and two in Missouri. Out of 10 married potential participants, one resided in California, one in Georgia, one in Illinois, one in Indiana, one in Texas, one in Vancouver, two in Missouri, and two in Tennessee. Out of

two potential participants in a domestic partnership, one resided in Arizona and the other in Missouri. Out of four divorced potential participants, one resided in California, one in Georgia, one in Kentucky, and one in Massachusetts.

Children. Out of 29 responses, 13 potential participants had no children, seven had one child, seven had between two and four children, and one had more than four children. One potential participant did not disclose his number of children. The pie chart in Figure 10 presented a visual representation of percentage-based children.

Figure 10

Children
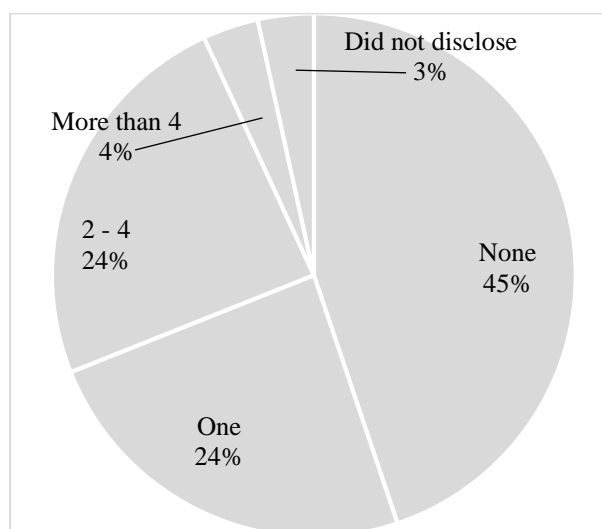
Children vs. Experiment Completion. Out of 13 potential participants with no children, two were disqualified, four completed the experiment, and seven did not. Out of seven potential participants with one child, one was disqualified, four completed the experiment, and two did not. Out of seven potential participants with between two and four children, one was disqualified, one completed the experiment, and five did not. One potential participant with more than four children completed the experiment. Another potential participant did not disclose his number of children.

Children vs. Survey Time Stamps. Out of 13 potential participants with no children, five finished the survey in less than a minute, three in one minute, two in two minutes, one in four minutes, one in eight minutes, and one in 10 minutes. Out of seven potential participants with one child, two finished the survey in less than a minute, four in one minute, and one in two minutes. Out of seven potential participants with between two and four children, four finished the survey in less than a minute, two in one minute, and one in two hours and three minutes. One potential participant with more than four children finished the survey in one minute. Another potential participant finished the survey in less than a minute but did not disclose his number of children.

Children vs. Gender. Out of 23 female potential participants, 11 had no children, seven had one child, and five had between two and four children. Out of six male potential participants, one did not disclose his number of children, two had no children, two had between two and four children, and one had more than four children.

Children vs. Age. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 18 and 24, all had no children. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 25 and 34, one had no children, two had one child, and one had between two and four children. Out of 16 potential participants between the ages of 35 and 44, six had no children, four had one child, five had between two and four children, and one did not disclose his number of children. Out of two potential participants between the ages of 45 and 54, one had no children and one had between two and four children. Out of three potential participants between the ages of 55 and 64, one had no children, one had one child, and one had more than four children.

Children vs. Education. Out of five potential participants with high school or equivalent education, two had no children, one had one child, and two had between two and four children. Out of two potential participants who completed trade school, both had one child. Out of six potential participants with a bachelor's degree, four had no children, one had between two and four children, and one did not disclose his number of children. Out of 15 potential participants with a master's degree, eight had no children, four had one child, two had between two and four children and, one had more than four children. One potential participant was a doctoral student with between two and four children.

Children vs. Ethnicity. One Asian potential participant had no children. Out of 17 Black/African American potential participants, nine had no children, four had one child, and four had between two and four children. Out of eight Caucasian potential participants, two had no children, two had one child, two had between two and four children, one had more than four children, and one did not disclose his number of children. Out of two Hispanic or Latino potential participants, one had no children and the other had one child. One potential participant of two or more ethnicities had between two and four children.

Children vs. Employment Status. Out of two unemployed (currently looking for work) potential participants, one had no children and the other had one child. Out of four student potential participants, two had no children, one had between two and four children, and one had more than four children. Out of three self-employed potential participants, one had no children, one had one child, and one had between two and four children. Out of two employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week) potential participants, one had one child and the other did not disclose his number of children. Out

of 18 employed full-time (40+ hours per week), 10 had no children, four had one child, and four had between two and four children.

Children vs. Location. Out of 13 potential participants with no children, one resided in California, one in Illinois, one in Indiana, one in Maryland, one in North Carolina, one in Pennsylvania, one in Tennessee, one in Texas, two in Georgia, and three in Missouri. Out of seven potential participants with one child, one resided in California, one in Kentucky, one in Maryland, one in Massachusetts, one in Missouri, one in Ohio, and one in Texas. Out of seven potential participants with between two and four children, one resided in Arizona, one in Illinois, one in Vancouver, two in Georgia, and two in Tennessee. One Missourian potential participant had more than four children. Another Illinoisian potential participant did not disclose his number of children.

Children vs. Marital Status. Out of 13 single (never married) potential participants, nine had no children, two had one child, one had between two and four children, and one did not disclose his number of children. Out of 10 married potential participants, three had no children, three had one child, and four had between two and four children. Out of two potential participants in a domestic partnership, one had between two and four children and the other had more than four children. Out of four divorced potential participants, one had no children, two had one child, and one had between two and four children.

Mental Health. Out of 29 responses, four potential participants indicated excellent mental health, 10 were very good, 10 were good, and five were fair. The mental health survey question was also asked during the final interview—to measure potential

improvements. None of the potential participants selected the "Poor" response. The pie

chart in Figure 11 presented a visual representation of percentage-based mental health.

Figure 11

Mental Health

Mental Health vs. Experiment Completion. Out of four potential participants with

excellent mental health, none completed the entire experiment. Out of 10 potential

participants with very good mental health, two were disqualified, three completed the

experiment, and five did not. Out of 10 potential participants with good mental health,

five completed the experiment, and the other five did not. Out of five potential

participants with fair mental health, two were disqualified, one completed the experiment,

and two did not.

Mental Health vs. Survey Time Stamps. Out of 12 potential participants who

finished the survey in less than a minute, two indicated an excellent mental health, three

were very good, five were good, and two were fair. Out of 10 potential participants who

finished the survey in one minute, five indicated a very good mental health, three were

good, and two were fair. Out of three potential participants who finished the survey in

two minutes, two indicated a very good mental health and one was fair. One potential

participant with good mental health finished the survey in four minutes. One potential participant with excellent mental health finished the survey in eight minutes. One potential participant with excellent mental health finished the survey in 10 minutes. One potential participant with a good mental health finished the survey in two hours and three minutes.

Mental Health vs. Gender. Out of 23 female potential participants, two indicated an excellent mental health, six were very good, 10 were good, and five were fair. Out of six male potential participants, two indicated an excellent mental health and four were very good.

Mental Health vs. Age. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 18 and 24, one indicated an excellent mental health, two were good, and one was fair. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 25 and 34, one indicated an excellent mental health, one was good, and two were fair. Out of 16 potential participants between the ages of 35 and 44, two indicated an excellent mental health, seven were very good, five were good, and two were fair. Out of two potential participants between the ages of 45 and 54, one indicated a very good mental health and the other good. Out of three potential participants between the ages of 55 and 64, two indicated a very good mental health and one was good.

Mental Health vs. Education. Out of five potential participants with high school or equivalent education, two indicated an excellent mental health, one was very good, and two were fair. Out of two potential participants who completed trade school, one indicated a very good mental health and the other good. Out of six potential participants who finished their bachelor's degree, two indicated a very good mental health, three were

good, and one was fair. Out of 15 potential participants with their master's degree, two indicated an excellent mental health, six were very good, five were good, and two were fair. One potential participant in the doctoral program indicated a good mental health.

Mental Health vs. Ethnicity. One Asian potential participant indicated an excellent mental health. Out of 17 Black/African American potential participants, three indicated an excellent mental health, four were very good, six were good, and four were fair. Out of eight Caucasian potential participants, six indicated a very good mental health and two were good. Out of two Hispanic or Latino potential participants, one indicated a good mental health and the other was fair. One potential participant was two or more ethnicities and indicated a good mental health.

Mental Health vs. Employment Status. Out of two unemployed (currently looking for work) potential participants, one indicated an excellent mental health and the other fair. Out of four student potential participants, one indicated a very good mental health, two were good, and one was fair. Out of three self-employed potential participants, all indicated a good mental health. Out of three employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week) potential participants, one indicated a very good mental health, one was good, and one was fair. Out of 17 employed full-time (40+ hours per week) potential participants, three indicated an excellent mental health, eight were very good, four were good, and two were fair.

Mental Health vs. Location. Out of four potential participants with excellent mental health, one resided in Georgia, one in Pennsylvania, one in Tennessee, and one in Texas. Out of 10 potential participants with very good mental health, one resided in Arizona, one in Georgia, one in Massachusetts, one in Tennessee, one in Texas, two in

Illinois, and three in Missouri. Out of 10 potential participants with good mental health, one resided in Georgia, one in Kentucky, one in Maryland, one in North Carolina, one in Tennessee, one in Vancouver, two in California, and two in Missouri. Out of five potential participants with fair mental health, one resided in Georgia, one in Illinois, one in Indiana, one in Maryland, and one in Ohio.

Mental Health vs. Marital Status. Out of 13 single (never married) potential participants, two indicated an excellent mental health, four were very good, four were good, and three were fair. Out of 10 married potential participants, two indicated an excellent mental health, three were very good, three were good, and two were fair. Out of two potential participants in a domestic partnership, both indicated a very good mental health. Out of four divorced potential participants, one indicated a very good mental health and three were good.

Mental Health vs. Children. Out of 13 potential participants with no children, three indicated an excellent mental health, three were very good, five were good, and two were fair. Out of seven potential participants with one child, two indicated a very good mental health, three were good, and two were fair. Out of seven potential participants with between two and four children, one indicated an excellent mental health, three were very good, two were good, and one was fair. One potential participant with more than four children indicated a very good mental health. One potential participant with very good mental health did not disclose his number of children.

Locus of Control. Locus of control responses determined experiment eligibility; potential participants who responded "Yes" to this question indicated an internal locus of control and "No" responses indicated an external locus of control. Studies have shown

that individuals external locus of control experience more barriers during their goal journey. Out of 29 responses, 25 potential participants responded "Yes" to this question and 4 responded "No." The four potential participants who responded "No" were disqualified from the experiment. Although this demographic survey included two disqualifying questions, all disqualified potential participants fell under the locus of control question. The pie chart in Figure 12 presented a visual representation of percentage-based locus of control.

Figure 12

Locus of Control
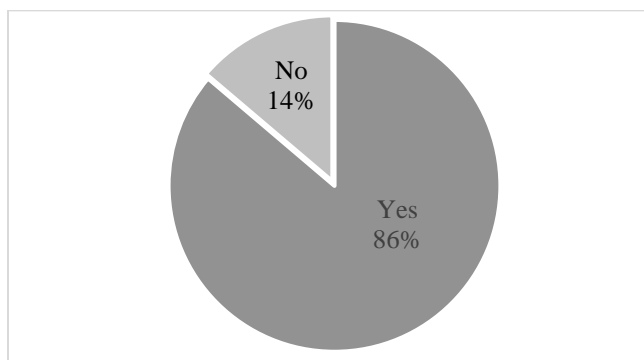
Locus of Control vs. Experiment Completion. Experiment qualification or disqualification was dependent on the locus of control question. Four disqualified potential participants responded "No" to this question. Out the remaining 25 potential participants who responded "Yes" to the locus of control question, 10 completed the experiment and 16 did not.

Locus of Control vs. Survey Time Stamps. Out of 12 potential participants who finished the survey in less than a minute, all responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. Out of 10 potential participants who finished the survey in one minute, seven responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and three did not. Out of three potential

participants who finished the survey in two minutes, two responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and one did not. One potential participant who finished the survey in four minutes responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. One potential participant who finished the survey in eight minutes responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. One potential participant who finished the survey in 10 minutes responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. One potential participant who finished the survey in two hours and three minutes responded "Yes" to the locus of control question.

Locus of Control vs. Gender. Out of six male potential participants, all responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. Out of 23 female potential participants, 19 responded "Yes" to the locus of control and four women responded "No."

Locus of Control vs. Age. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 18 and 24, all responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. Out of four potential participants between the ages of 25 and 34, three responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and one responded "No." Out of 16 potential participants between the ages of 35 and 44, 13 responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and three responded "No." Out of two potential participants between the ages of 45 and 54, both responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. Out of three potential participants between the ages of 55 and 64, all responded "Yes" to the locus of control question.

Locus of Control vs. Education. Out of five potential participants with high school or equivalent education, all responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. Out of two potential participants who completed trade school, both responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. Out of six potential participants who completed their bachelor's degree, five responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and one responded "No." Out of 15

potential participants with their master's degree, 12 responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and three responded "No." One potential participant in the doctoral program answered "Yes" to the locus of control question.

Locus of control vs. Ethnicity. One Asian and two Hispanic/Latino potential participants responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. Out of 17 Black/African American potential participants, 13 responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and four responded "No." Out of eight Caucasian potential participants, all responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. Out of two Hispanic or Latino potential participants, both responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. One potential participant of two or more ethnicities responded "Yes" to the locus of control question.

Locus of Control vs. Employment Status. Out of two unemployed (currently looking for work) potential participants, both responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. Out of four student potential participants, all responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. Out of three self-employed potential participants, all responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. Out of three employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week) potential participants, two responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and one responded "No." Out of 17 employed full-time (40+ hours per week) potential participants, 14 responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and three responded "No."

Locus of Control vs. Location. Out of 25 potential participants who responded "Yes" to the locus of control question, one resided in Arizona, one in Illinois, one in Indiana, one in Kentucky, one in Maryland, one in Massachusetts, one in North Carolina, one in Ohio, one in Pennsylvania, one in Vancouver, two in California, two in Texas,

three in Tennessee, four in Georgia, and four in Missouri. Out of four potential participants who responded "No" to the locus of control question, one resided in Illinois, one in Maryland, and two in Missouri.

Locus of Control vs. Marital Status. Out of 13 single (never married) potential participants, 10 responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and three responded "No." Out of 10 married potential participants, nine responded "Yes" to the locus of control and one responded "No." Out of two potential participants in a domestic partnership, both responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. Out of four divorced potential participants, all responded "Yes" to the locus of control question.

Locus of Control vs. Children. Out of 13 potential participants with no children, 11 responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and two responded "No." Out of seven potential participants with one child, six responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and one responded "No." Out of seven potential participants with between two and four children, six responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and one responded "No." One potential participant with more than four children responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. One potential participant responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and did not disclose his number of children.

Locus of Control vs. Mental Health. Out of four potential participants with excellent mental health, all responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. Out of 10 potential participants with very good mental health, eight responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and two responded "No." Out of 10 potential participants with good mental health, all responded "Yes" to the locus of control question. Out of five potential

participants with fair mental health, three responded "Yes" to the locus of control question and two responded "No."

Self-regulation. Self-regulation responses determined experiment eligibility. No charts or graphs accompanied self-regulation responses because all potential participants responded "Yes"; this demographical breakdown included:

- Experiment Completion: Four potential participants were disqualified, 10 completed the experiment, and 16 did not.

- Survey Time Stamps: Twelve potential participants finished in less than a minute, 10 in one minute, three in two minutes, one in four minutes, one in eight minutes, one in 10 minutes, and one in two hours and three minutes.

- Gender: Twenty-three potential participants were women and six were men.

- Age: Four potential participants were between the ages of 18 and 24, four between the ages of 25 and 34, 16 between the ages of 35 and 44, two between the ages of ages of 45 and 54, and three between the ages of 55 and 64.

- Education: Five potential participants completed high school or equivalent education, two completed trade school, six completed their bachelor's degree, 15 completed their master's degree, and one completed their doctorate.

- Ethnicity: This experiment was comprised of one potential participant of two or more ethnicities, one Asian, 17 Black/African Americans, eight Caucasians, and two Hispanic or Latinos.

- Employment Status: This experiment included two unemployed (currently looking for work), four student, three self-employed, three employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week), and 17 employed full-time (40+ hours per week) potential participants.

- Location: This experiment encompassed one potential participant who resided in Arizona, one in Indiana, one in Kentucky, one in Massachusetts, one in North Carolina, one in Ohio, one in Pennsylvania, one in Vancouver, two in California, two in Maryland, two in Texas, three in Illinois, three in Tennessee, four in Georgia, and five in Missouri.

- Marital Status: This experiment involved 13 single (never married), 10 married, four divorced, and two potential participants in a domestic partnership.

- Children: Out of 29 potential participants, 13 had no children, seven had one child, seven had between two and four children, and one potential participant with more than four children; one potential participant did not disclose his number of children.

- Mental Health: Out of 29 potential participants, four indicated an excellent mental health, 10 were very good, 10 were good, and five were fair.

- Locus of Control: Four disqualified participants responded "No" to the locus of control question and 25 responded "Yes."

Self-Efficacy Assessment

The same self-efficacy assessment was used to measure pre- and post-experiment self-efficacy changes. Potential participants responded to these statements:

1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.

2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.

3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.

4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.

5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.

6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.

7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping
   abilities.

8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.

9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.

10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

Statement responses were scored accordingly.

Table 3.

Self-Efficacy Scoring

Not at all true	Hardly true	Moderately true	Exactly true
1	2	3	4

Pre-Experiment Assessment Completion. Out of 25 selected participants, 18 completed the self-efficacy pre-assessment. The pie chart in Figure 13 presented a visual representation of percentage-based completion at the self-efficacy pre-assessment point of the experiment.

170

Figure 13

Pre-Experiment Assessment Completion
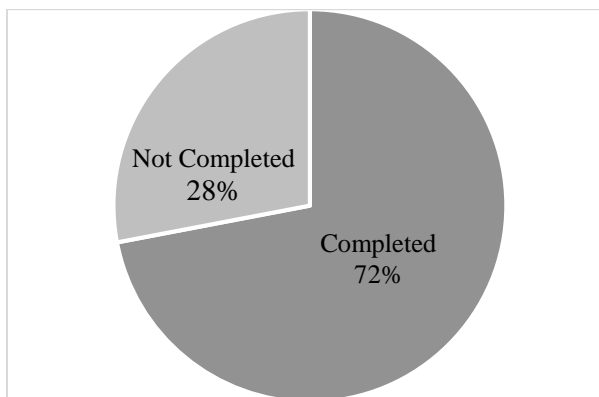
Pre-Assessment Experiment Completion. Out of 18 participants who finished the self-efficacy pre-assessment, 10 completed the experiment and eight did not. The pie chart in Figure 14 presented a visual representation of percentage-based completion at the self-efficacy pre-assessment point of the experiment.

Figure 14

Pre-Assessment Experiment Completion
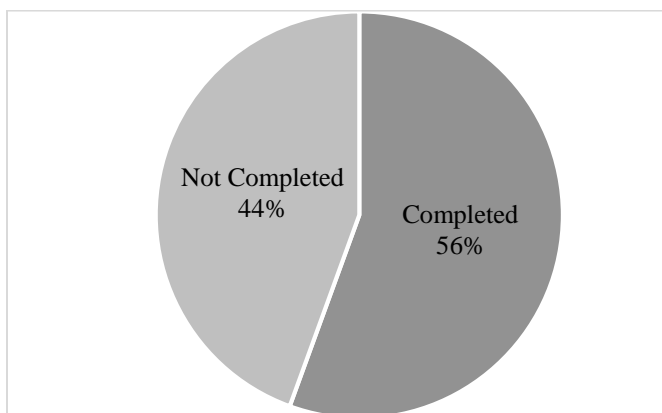
Pre-Assessment Active Participant Time Stamps. Out of 10 active participants (who completed the experiment), three finished the pre-assessment in less than a minute, four in one minute, two in two minutes, and one in three minutes. The pie chart Figure 15

presented a visual representation of number-based pre-assessment time stamps of

participants who completed the experiment.

Figure 15

Pre-Assessment Active Participant Time Stamps
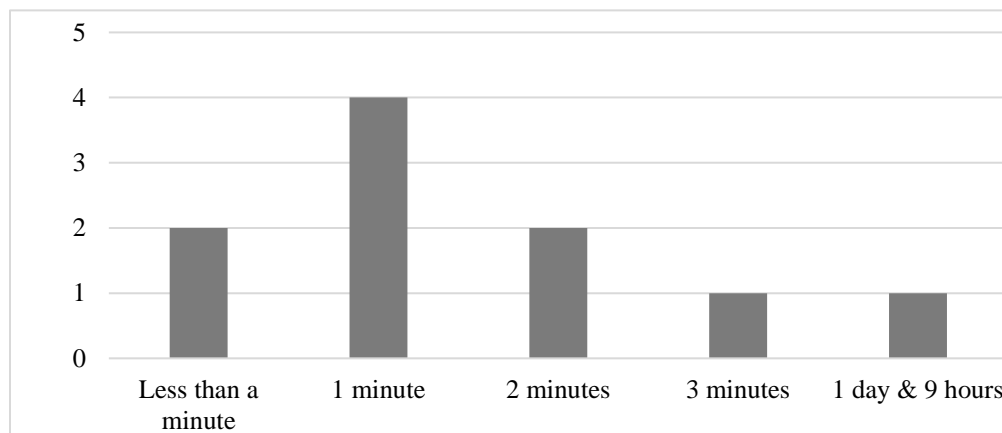
Pre-Assessment Active Participant Responses.

Pre-assessment data revealed the following responses:

- Statement 1 – Two active participants responded with exactly true and eight with

    moderately true.

- Statement 2 – One active participant responded with exactly true, two with hardly

    true, and seven with moderately true.

- Statement 3 – Two active participants responded with hardly true and eight with

    moderately true.

- Statement 4 – One active participant responded with exactly true and nine with

    moderately true.

- Statement 5 – Three active participants responded with exactly true and seven

    with moderately true.

- Statement 6 – One active participant responded with hardly true, three with exactly true, and six with moderately true.

- Statement 7 – Two active participants responded with exactly true, three with hardly true, and five with moderately true.

- Statement 8 – Three active participants responded with exactly true and seven with moderately true.

- Statement 9 – Two active participants responded with exactly true and eight with moderately true.

- Statement 10 – Two active participants responded with exactly true and eight with moderately true.

No active participants selected the not at all true option. The stacked bar graph in Figure 16 presented a visual representation of number-based pre-assessment statement responses from participants who completed the experiment.

Figure 16

Pre-Assessment Active Participant Responses
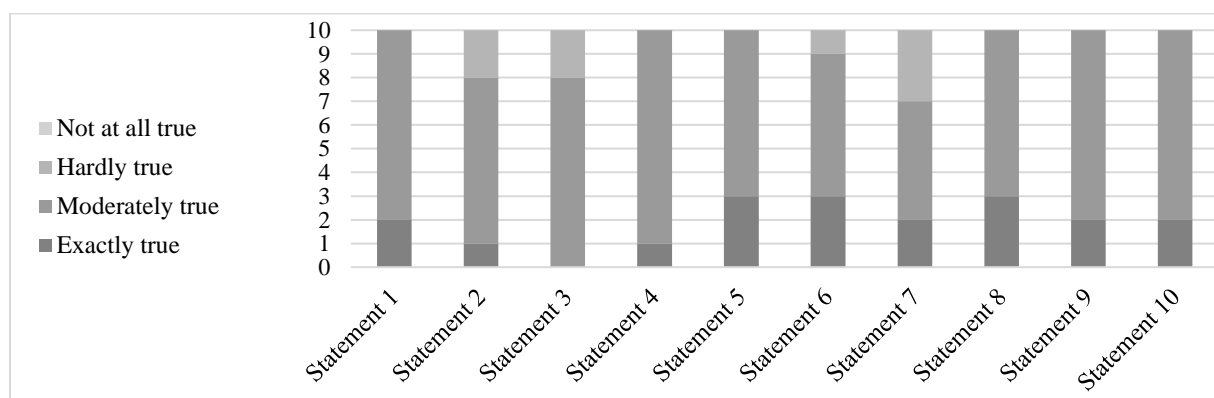
Pre-Assessment Omitted Participant Time Stamps. Out of eight omitted participants (who did not complete the experiment), two finished the pre-assessment in

less than a minute, two in one minute, one in two minutes, one in 21 minutes, one in three hours and one minute, and one in nine and a half hours. The bar graph in Figure 17 presented a visual representation of number-based pre-assessment time stamps of participants who did not complete the experiment.

Figure 17

Pre-Assessment Omitted Participant Time Stamps
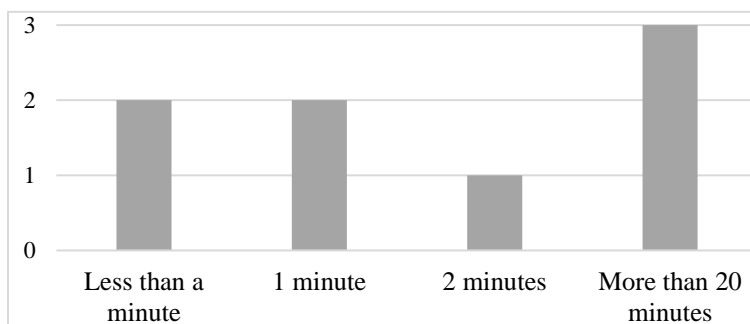
Pre-Assessment Omitted Participant Responses.

Pre-assessment data revealed the following responses:

- Statement 1 – One omitted participant responded with not at all true, three with moderately true, and four with exactly true.

- Statement 2 – Two omitted participants responded with exactly true, two with hardly true, and four with moderately true.

- Statement 3 – One omitted participant responded with hardly true, two with exactly true, and five with moderately true.

- Statement 4 – One omitted participant responded with hardly true, three with exactly true, and four with moderately true.

- Statement 5 – One omitted participant responded with not at all true, two with hardly true, two with exactly true, and three with moderately true.

- Statement 6 – One omitted participant responded with hardly true, three with moderately true, and four with exactly true.

- Statement 7 – Two omitted participants responded with exactly true, three with moderately true, and three with hardly true.

- Statement 8 – Two omitted participants responded with hardly true, three with moderately true, and three with exactly true.

- Statement 9 – Two omitted participants responded with hardly true, three with moderately true, and three with exactly true.

- Statement 10 – One omitted participant responded with hardly true, two with exactly true, and five with moderately true.

The stacked bar graph in Figure 18 presented a visual representation of number-based pre-assessment statement responses from participants who did not complete the experiment.

Figure 18

Pre-Assessment Omitted Participant Responses
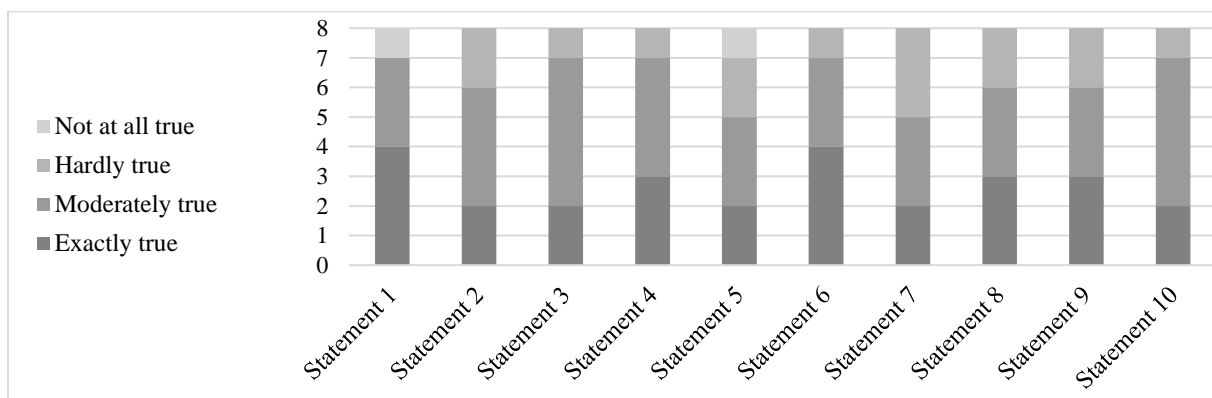
Post-Experiment Assessment/Experiment Completion. All 10 active

participants completed the self-efficacy pre-assessment. The post-assessment was one of

the instruments that confirmed experiment completion.

Post-Assessment Participant Time Stamps. Out of 10 participants who

completed the experiment, three finished the post-experiment self-efficacy assessment in

less than a minute, three in one minute, two in two minutes, and one in 54 minutes. An

additional participant completed the post-assessment during the final interview. The pie

chart in Figure 19 presented a visual representation of number-based pre-assessment time

stamps of participants who finished the post-experiment assessment.

Figure 19

Post-Assessment Participant Time Stamps
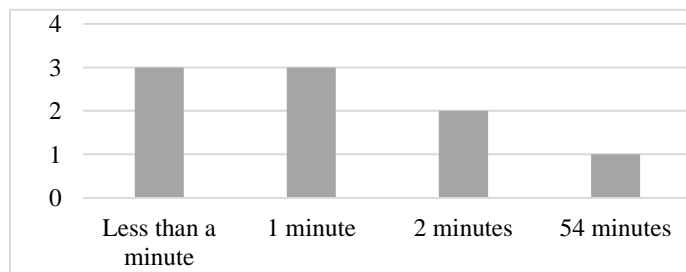
Post-Assessment Participant Responses.

Post-assessment data revealed the following responses:

- Statement 1 – Four participants responded with exactly true and six with

  moderately true.

- Statement 2 – Two participants responded with exactly true and eight with

  moderately true.

- Statement 3 – Four participants responded with moderately true and six with

  exactly true.

- Statement 4 – Two participants responded with moderately true and eight with exactly true.

- Statement 5 – Four participants responded with moderately true and six with exactly true.

- Statement 6 – Two participants responded with moderately true and eight with exactly true.

- Statement 7 – One participant responded with hardly true, four with exactly true, and five with moderately true.

- Statement 8 – Two participants responded with moderately true and eight with exactly true.

- Statement 9 – Three participants responded with moderately true and seven with exactly true.

- Statement 10 – Four participants responded with moderately true and six with exactly true.

No participants selected the not at all true option. The stacked bar graph in Figure 20 presented a visual representation of number-based post-assessment statement responses from participants who completed the experiment.

Figure 20

Post-Assessment Participant Responses
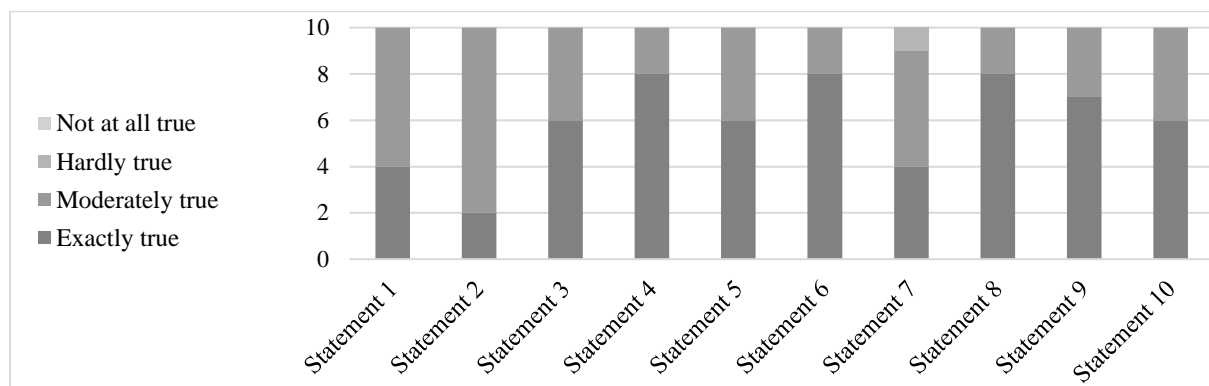
Pre-Assessment Total Comparisons. Out of a possible score of 320, omitted pre-experiment participants scored 248 (78%). Out of a possible score of 400, active pre-experiment participants scored 311 (78%). The pie chart in Figure 21 presented a visual representation of percentage-based pre-experiment self-efficacy assessment total scores for omitted and active participants.

Figure 21

Pre-Assessment Total Comparisons
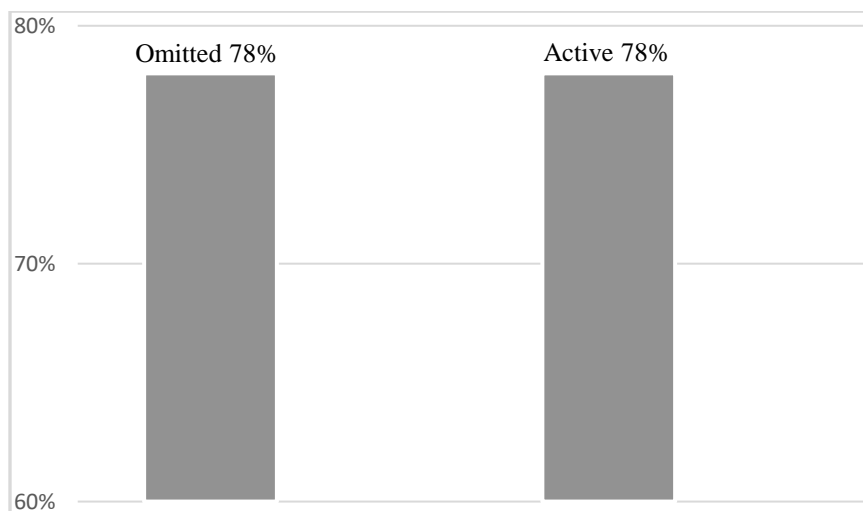
Pre- and Post-Assessment Total Comparisons. Out of a possible score of 400, active pre-experiment participants scored 311 (78%). Post-experiment active participants scored 358 (90%). The pie chart in Figure 22 presented a visual representation of percentage-based pre- and post-experiment self-efficacy assessment total scores.

Figure 22

Pre- and Post-Assessment Total Comparisons
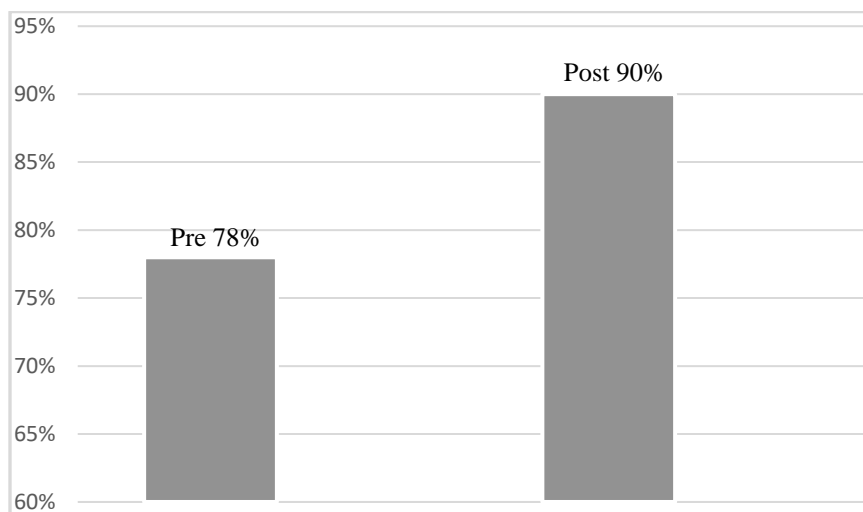
Experiment Completion by Group

The below bullets provided a distribution of recruited group participants: those who completed versus did not complete the experiment. Each bullet was accompanied by a pie chart to visually represent percentage-based experiment completion by group.

- Group 1: Seven participants were recruited; four completed the experiment and three did not.

Figure 23

Group 1 Experiment Completion
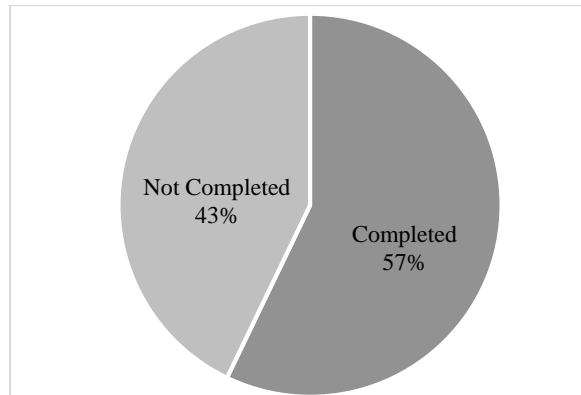
- Group 2: Seven participants were recruited; two completed the experiment and

  five did not.

Figure 24

Group 2 Experiment Completion
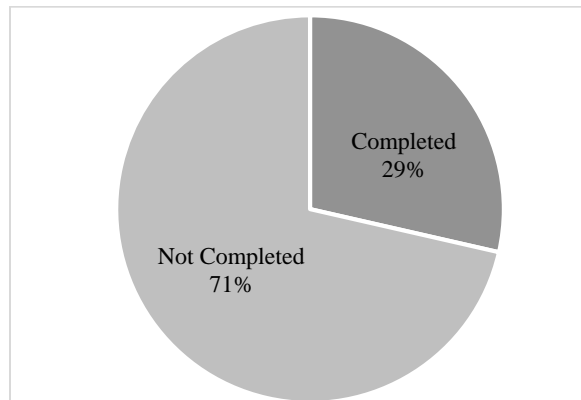
- Group 3: Five participants were recruited; four completed the experiment and one

  did not.

Figure 25

Group 3 Experiment Completion
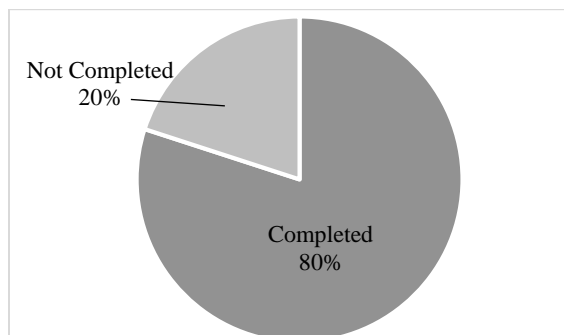
The pie chart in Figure 26 presented a visual representation of percentage-based group comparisons of participants who completed and did not complete the experiment.

Figure 26

Group Experiment Completion Comparisons
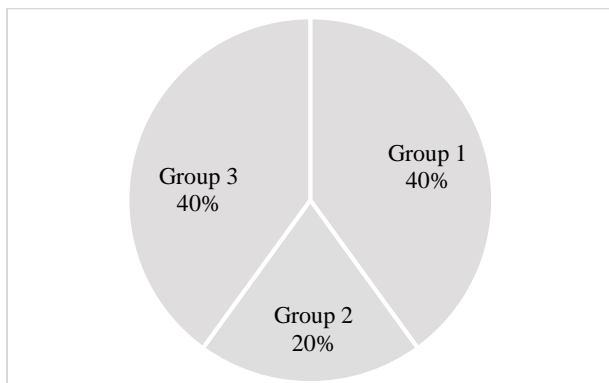
Final Interview and Group Documents

The researcher collected final interview data from 10 participants. Only 44% of the participants returned their completed group document—one from Group 2 and three from Group 3; no Group 1 participants completed this task. Listed below is a qualitative data analyses breakdown for each group.

Group 1: Final Interview and Document Data

Four Group 1 participants completed the experiment.

Content/Framework/Narrative Analysis. The following themes/patterns were drawn from Group 1 interview and group document responses:

o   Interview Question 1: When asked about their motivation to participate in the experiment, three Group 1 participants mentioned the study topic and two desired self-improvements. Additional singular responses highlighted timing, guilt/compassion, accountability, uniqueness/organization, and self-regulation/self-directedness. Most responses suggested self-gratifying reasons.

o   Interview Question 2: When asked why they chose Group 1, half of the participants responded with accountability/responsibility and autonomy/independence. Additional singular responses included self-accomplishment, uniqueness/individuality, authority, and structure. The researcher catered the *Self-Directed Goal Theory* to the individual, making them responsible for their own goal planning and implementation; the data reflected that half of the participants realized its purpose.

o   Interview Question 3: when asked their opinion of the Group 1 timeframe, three participants valued the 60 days and two mentioned its comfortability. Singular responses mentioned adaptability, autonomy/independence, goal specificity, goal rework, and following directions; based on these responses, it seemed that participants may have encountered roadblocks, reflected on them, and made conscious adjustments.

o   Interview Question 4: When asked what personal development goals they selected and if they achieved them, four Group 1 participants chose self, three chose ambition, two chose physical, and one chose a mental goal. None of the

participants chose a social or spiritual goals—goals that focus on relationships. With regard to goal attainment, 80% of goals were achieved; all physical and mental goals were met, two out of three ambition goals were met, and three out of four self-goals were met.

o   Interview Question 5: When asked about their learning style, all Group 1 participants identified with being verbal learners. Two singular outlying styles were physical and social. In the researcher's experience, verbal learners tend to be extremely detail-oriented.

o   Interview Question 6: When asked about tackling one goal or multiple goals at once, only two Group 1 participants provided a clear-cut response split between one goal or two goals; all participants reflected on goal commitment, goal priority, goal rework, and goal timing. The absence of patterns/themes indicated strong goal-setting subjectivity.

o   Interview Question 7: When asked about the three most important areas in their lives, all participants responded with family and half mentioned finances or health. The researcher immediately recognized a disconnect between important areas and chosen goals; Group 1 participants chose financial and health-related goals. Although participants stressed the importance of familial relationships, they did not choose relationship-oriented goals.

o   Interview Question 8: When reflecting on their experiment journey, Group 1 participant data only exposed one theme, autonomy/independence; three participants provided this response. Other data was widespread, reflecting on a need for consistency, not judging self, being accountable, learning lessons,

learning to better manage time, observing patterns, creating transferrable goals, being aware, and learning to organize/prioritize. Although responses were extensive, Group 1 participants provided the most feedback on their experiment journey.

o   Interview Question 9: When asked how they felt about creating their own tasks/motivators, two participants indicated that they felt empowered, motivated, or had to later rework their tasks/motivators. They also appreciated the program's organization, individualization, self-responsibility, and reflection.

o   Interview Question 10: When asked about their attitude and approach toward the experiment, three Group 1 participants responded with optimism/hope, and two with excitement or motivation; however, this only accounted for the experiment's start. Attitudes during the experiment ran the gamut of apprehension, fear, disappointment, shame, happiness, reflection, angst, comfortability, and inconvenience. Participants also discussed their goal selections, time management, and unforeseen life circumstances. In the researcher's experience, attitudes vary depending on the setting, week, day, hour, minute, and even second—and a person's attitude makes the difference between goal performance or stagnation.

o   Interview Question 11: When asked what stood out during the experiment, half of the Group 1 participants mentioned the self-monitoring checklist; all other responses were singular such as goal importance, daily work, motivators, awareness, time, and future accomplishment. All Group 1 participants utilized the self-monitoring checklist.

o   Interview Question 12: When asked if they completed any self-monitoring checklists, all Group 1 participants responded with Yes. When describing the checklist, participants mentioned awareness, therapy, overanalyzing, procrastination, goal timing, themes/patterns, and being overwhelmed.

o   Interview Question 13: When asked what is required to reach goals, half of the Group 1 participants mentioned accountability and openness to change. Singular responses were smaller tasks, daily monitoring, mindset, motivation, consistency, grace, awareness, implementation, and hard work.

o   Interview Question 14: When asked how they rated their mental health, Group 1 participants responded with very good, good, fair, and poor. When measuring mental health changes pre- and post-experiment, the researcher concluded that two Group 1 participants improved their mental health (one who achieved both of her goals and one who met one of four goals), one participant's mental health remained the same despite achieving both of her goals, and one significantly dropped even though she accomplished one of her two goals. The researcher was unable to find a correlation between goal achievement and mental health condition.

o   Interview Question 15: When asking what they would do differently, half of the Group 1 participants mentioned journaling and conducting a trial run. Singular mentions referenced goal selection, reflection, repeating daily tasks, planning, and time management.

o   Group Documents: None of the Group 1 participants returned their completed group documents. Based on interview feedback about goal rework,

time management, prioritization and trial run, program deviation may be presumable.

Discourse Analysis. A common childhood rhyme proclaimed that "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me" (Horton, 2019, para. 1). For someone with a tough skin, this affirmative quote may be true. But, on a psychological level, a person's words mean something (Horton, 2019, para. 3). In this discourse analysis, the researcher separated the positive and negative word usage of Group 1 participants; she also considered potential cultural connections. Positive words promote success (Horton, 2019, para. 19) and negative words breed stress and anxiety (Horton, 2019, para. 4). Participants' words that could be interpreted as positive were eye-opening, reflective, virtue, implementation, support system (as opposed to accountability), and therapy. Words that could be interpreted as negative were procrastinator, busy, change, guilty, excuses, control, sporadic, angst, overanalyze, perfection, intentions, unrealistic, inconvenience, pressure, discipline, judging, apprehensive, weird, overwhelm, stress, effort, wishful, and choosing. In Group 1, negative word usage far exceeded positive ones. Group 1 participants were made up of all women (one between the ages of 18 and 24 and three between the ages of 35 and 44). Participants' races, education levels, employment, locations, and number of children varied. No cultural trends were found in relation to positive or negative word usage.

Grounded Theory. When comparing the control group and both experimental groups, Group 2 participants achieved all their goals; unfortunately, only two participants completed Group 2. Group 1 included four participants who achieved 75% of their goals and Group 3 included four participants who achieved 50%. Since group participant

numbers and goal amounts varied, it was necessary to assess "the number of total attempts made (the sum of all groups' possible goals) along with the number of successes (the sum of all groups' attained goals)" (Maloney, 2021, para. 4). The researcher believed that the success rate formula would best calculate the most productive group. When dividing the number of goals achieved (per group) by the total number of goals (14), the group success percentages drastically changed. The success rate formula indicated that the number of successes must be divided by the number of attempts or trials made. Then, the result must be multiplied by 100 to convert it to a percentage. Based on this formula (Maloney, 2021, paras. 5-6), each group's results were:

Group 1: $\frac{6}{14} = 0.4286 \times 100 = 43\%$

Group 2: $\frac{2}{14} = 0.1428 \times 100 = 14\%$

Group 3: $\frac{2}{14} = 0.1428 \times 100 = 14\%$

The success rate formula determined that Group 1 achieved the most goal success. The researcher required that all Group 1 participants select two goals in two personal development areas (Group 2 required one goal and Group 3 had no goal number requirements). Although Group 3 did not specify a goal amount, all participants selected one goal. The possibilities of theory transforming to fact increased when comparing success formula results and group goal amounts. However, other factors must be considered such as personal development areas, timeframes, demographics, and self-efficacy levels.

The researcher referenced the personal development areas outlined in the *Self-Directed Goal Theory*. An analysis of each group's attained personal development goals revealed that Group 1 attained six goals, falling in the self (1), mental (1), ambition (2),

and physical (2) personal development areas. Group 2 attained two goals within the spiritual and ambition areas. Group 3 attained two goals in the ambition areas. An initial review of group personal development areas showed that ambition goals had the most success. However, Group 1's personal development areas were more widespread (only excluding social and spiritual—two relationship-oriented goals). The data uncovered that the 30-day Group 2 program fared well when it came to spiritual and/or ambition goals. On the contrary, ambition goals can be achieved through any program.

In this experiment, the researcher chose varied group timeframes to determine whether timeframe impacted goal achievement. An analysis of the final interview's Question 3 (How did you feel about the group's timeframe?) revealed the common topic of "goal rework" among Group 1 and 3 participants—two groups with 60-day timeframes. Group 1 and 3 participants also mentioned goal rework in response to interview Question 6 (What is your opinion on tackling one goal or multiple goals at once?), Question 8 (Tell me about your experience participating in this experiment), and Question 9 (What did it feel like to (Group 1: create your own tasks/motivators / Group 2: complete the scheduled daily tasks / Group 3: follow your own path/plan?). This pattern continued with Group 3 participants when responding to Question 11 (What stood out to you the most during the experiment?) and their group documents. This supported one notion; additional time allocates room for self-analysis, realization, and modification.

Demographical factors also were considered when assessing goal achievement drivers. A review of nine group participants who achieved their goals revealed that demographic champions were female participants at 88%, participants with ages ranging from 35-44 at 56%, participants with their Master's degree at 56%, Black/African

American participants at 50%, participants employed full-time (40+ hours per week) at 50%, Californian and Missourian participants combined at 45%, married participants at 33%, and participants with one child at 45%.

Since the mental health demographic question was also asked during the final interview, it delivered more in-depth data. The outperforming demographic mental health response was "Good" at 56%. Two tied interview mental health responses, Very Good and Good, lead at 67%. However, when comparing mental health changes pre- and post-experiment, four participants experienced no mental health changes; all four participants achieved 100% of their goals. Ironically, the highest self-efficacy increase, 8, experienced a drastic decline in mental health, responding with "Good" pre-experiment and "Poor" post-experiment. This evidence validated that mental health is inconsequential when it comes to goal achievement.

On the contrary, all successful (goal-achieving) participants experienced self-efficacy improvement. On a Likert scale, self-efficacy growth ranged from 1-8 with an average of 3.625. This data confirmed that Group 1 fulfilled the study's main purpose, boosting self-efficacy. However, grounded theory does not "aim to test a hypothesis" (Grounded Theory Analysis with MAXQDA, 2021, para. 2), the collection of qualitative (and some slight quantitative) data strived to "ground" a theory (Grounded Theory Analysis with MAXQDA, 2021, para. 2), —taking the researcher's original *Self-Directed Goal Theory* as gospel. A further investigation of personal development areas, timeframes, and demographics revealed the following Group 1 qualities:

1. Personal development areas are diverse, achieving maximum success in the self, mental, ambition, and physical areas.

2. The 60-day timeframe allows space for reflection and rerouting.

3. Although goal success is subjective; demographical data revealed that either women seek personal development more or have more success with it.

4. This program guarantees self-efficacy improvement.

Group 2: Final Interview and Document Data

Two Group 2 participants completed the experiment.

Content/Framework/Narrative Analysis. The following themes/patterns were drawn from Group 2 interview and group document responses:

- o Interview Question 1: When asked about their motivation to participate in the experiment, one Group 2 participants mentioned guilt/compassion and the other responded with accountability; both responses were shared among Group 1 and 2 participants, and both revealed external motivating factors.

- o Interview Question 2: When asked why they chose Group 2, participants responded with curiosity, time, structure, and suitability. The time, structure, and suitability responses spoke to participants' knowledge of self—how much time they could dedicate toward their goals, how they learn, and how they set themselves up for goal success. The researcher surmised that participants had evident curiosity about the book, *Manifest Anything You Want in 30 Days* (Emanuele, 2013). The book's title stood out, inspiring goal inclusion with the word, Anything, and quantifying time when announcing 30 Days.

- o Interview Question 3: when asked their opinion of the Group 2 timeframe, words like comfort and timeline represented ease with the 30-day timeframe. Other topics embodied tension such as goal specificity, complexity, and

rework; the researcher believed that these responses indicated participants'
goal execution or realized goal exclusions within the book.

- o Interview Question 4: When asked what personal development goals they selected and if they achieved them, Group 2 participants chose ambition and self. Both participants achieved their goals. Both admitted to completing make-up work, potentially validating the researcher's Interview Question 3 suspicion of goal execution.

- o Interview Question 5: When asked about their learning style, Group 2 participants identified as verbal, physical, and visual learners. The book's structure included verbal statements, physical activities, and visualization exercises—catering to each Group 2 learning style. Participants may have struggled with daily tasks outside of their learning style—hence, the goal rework (mentioned in Question 3 and 4 responses).

- o Interview Question 6: When asked about tackling one goal or multiple goals at once, Group 2 participants' responses were split between one and two goals. Participants also reflected on goal commitment, goal specificity, and focus/attention; all topics surrounded goal implementation.

- o Interview Question 7: When asked about the three most important areas in their lives, all participants responded with family and religion. Like Group 1's Question 7 responses, the researcher identified an incongruence between important areas and chosen goals; Group 2 participants chose self and ambition goals. Further exploration may expose parallels between goal choice and goal execution.

- o Interview Question 8: When reflecting on their experiment journey, both Group 2 participants reflected on a daily task, affirmations. Other data was widespread, reflecting positively on motivation, reflection, fear articulation, repetition, and visualization and negatively on apprehension, time management, focus, and stress. Although responses were scattered, Group 2 participants provided more positive than negative responses.

- o Interview Question 9: When asked how they felt about completing their daily tasks, both participants indicated that they felt good about it—yet, considered it a chore or stressful. They valued the program's motivation but disliked its lack of individualization/goal limitations. They also acknowledged experiencing guilt, life circumstances, and time management struggles.

- o Interview Question 10: When asked about their attitude and approach toward the experiment, Group 2 participants individually responded with openness, comfortability, excitement, and curiosity—all were positive outlooks but, seemingly, pointed to the start of the experiment.

- o Interview Question 11: When asked what stood out during the experiment, both Group 2 participants mentioned daily affirmations; all other responses were singular such as quotes, motivation, and validation.

- o Interview Question 12: When asked if they completed any self-monitoring checklists, one Group 2 participant responded with No and the other with Yes; the participant who responded with Yes recognized feelings of fear and doubt.

- o Interview Question 13: When asked what is required to reach goals, half of the Group 2 participants mentioned perseverance, commitment, self-reflection, objectivity, and realistic goals.

- o Interview Question 14: When asked how they rated their mental health, Group 2 participants responded with good and very good. When measuring mental health changes pre- and post-experiment, the researcher concluded that, despite both Group 2 participants achieving their goals, one participant's mental health declined and the other remained the same. She was unable to find a correlation between goal achievement and mental health condition.

- o Interview Question 15: When asking what they would do differently, one Group 2 participant mentioned accountability and the other responded with nothing.

- o Group Documents: One Group 2 participant returned his completed group document. Upon reviewing the document, the researcher noticed strong task work on affirmations, fears, emotions, treating self, visualization, and the grateful/happiness lists. This aligned with the participant's visual and physical learning style. The participant did not respond to the manifesting goal story task, letting go task, reverse fear statement, and opposite belief system tasks; coincidentally, each task required introspection on obstacles/roadblocks.

Discourse Analysis. In this discourse analysis, the researcher separated positive and negative word usage of Group 2 participants; she also considered potential cultural connections. Participants' words that could be interpreted as positive were important, accomplish, structure, suited, chance, achieve, full attention, focus, motivation,

articulating my fears, visualization, plan, excited, learn a new skill, open, internal

validation, accountability, progress, perseverance, commitment, objective, realistic and

the ability to look at themselves; a particular participant positively stated, "I want to

master my goal, be passionate, and committed to my goal."

Words that could be interpreted as negative were trouble, keeping track, alright,

life circumstances, procrastination, preference, lack of time, stressed, chore, trick myself,

self-judgement, failure, justify, overwhelmed, doubting myself, push, didn't feel like

doing it and what needed to be done. One negative participant response was, "it was like

doing a task just to be doing a task. It would have been more beneficial if it was catered

to me." The same participant reflected on the Group 2 program, stating, that it was

alright, kind of repetitive, and not a life-altering thing." Group 2 participants were made

up of one woman (between the ages of 35 and 44) and one man (between the ages of 55

and 64). Participants differed by race, employment, location, and number of children. The

only demographic similarity was the master's degree education level. No cultural trends

were found in relation to positive or negative word usage.

Group 3: Final Interview and Document Data

Four Group 3 participants completed the experiment.

Content/Framework/Narrative Analysis. The following themes/patterns were

drawn from Group 3 interview and group document responses:

- o Interview Question 1: When asked about their motivation to participate in the
  experiment, three Group 3 participants mentioned the topic, and half
  mentioned accountability and guilt/compassion; accountability and
  guilt/compassion were universal responses among both experimental groups

and the control group. Additional Group 3 motivating factors were timing,
self-regulation/self-directedness, and self-accomplishment. Group 3
participants mentioned their personal development areas (health- losing
weight), goal requirements (SMART), their strong areas (planning, multi-
tasking, conscientiousness, and philanthropy), and the time of year (New
Year's resolution) in their responses.

o   Interview Question 2: When asked why they chose Group 3, half of the
participants responded with accountability/responsibility and suitability.
Individual participants responded with autonomy/independence and
availability. A single participant's response indicated an insecurity of self-
directedness by saying, "I was afraid to do this group, I thought I belonged in
Group 2. But I needed to be responsible for and accountable to myself."
Although Group 1's program description mentioned self-directedness, two
Group 3 participants still steered clear of it; they wanted full control over their
goal implementation.

o   Interview Question 3: when asked their opinion of the Group 3 timeframe,
three participants responded with the word, good, and one participant stated
that the needed another 30 days. Singular topic responses were comfortability,
goal specificity, goal complexity, and goal rework.

o   Interview Question 4: When asked what personal development goals they
selected and if they achieved them, two Group 3 participants chose health and
other participants chose ambition and self. Goal attainment results were split;
two participants achieved their ambition and self-personal development goals,

and two participants did not accomplish their health goals. Additional goal attainment research may expose some health goal barriers.

o Interview Question 5: When asked about their learning style, two Group 3 participants identified as physical, verbal, and visual learners; a single participant identified as logical.

o Interview Question 6: When asked about tackling one goal or multiple goals at once, half of the Group 3 participants responded with one goal and half with multiple goals. Participants also reflected on goal type, goal importance/priority, goal rework, and goal complexity; most responses endorsed goal planning and only one referenced goal execution.

o Interview Question 7: When asked about the three most important areas in their lives, all participants responded with livelihood and half responded with health; this area was exclusive to Group 3. Individual area responses such as stability, love, and religion; stability and love were also exclusive to Group 3.

o Interview Question 8: When reflecting on their experiment journey, Group 3 participants (2) shared only one topic, time management. Other data was widespread, reflecting positively on the organization/prioritization, focus/attention, goal commitment, habits, motivation, and documenting accomplishments and negatively on having to rework goals and recognize triggers/distractions. Participants also mentioned their own life circumstances and complexity with finding goal-setting cellular applications.

o Interview Question 9: When asked how they felt about following their own path/plan, two participants mentioned their autonomy/independence and lack

of accountability—two opposing topics. They also acknowledged habit formation, having transferable goals, and reworking their goals.

- o Interview Question 10: When asked about their attitude and approach toward the experiment, Group 3 participants individually responded with helpfulness, optimism/hope, anticipation, excitement, and privilege when referencing the start of the experiment; one participant acknowledged anxiety towards the end of the experiment.

- o Interview Question 11: When asked what stood out during the experiment, Group 3 participants provided separate responses such as biweekly check-ins, forming habits, reworking goals, resilience, and familiarity. One participant spoke about her life circumstances clouding goal performance.

- o Interview Question 12: When asked if they completed any self-monitoring checklists, half of the Group 3 participants responded with No and the other half with Yes; Yes responses reflected on their focus, awareness, time management, organization, and the helpfulness of the checklist.

- o Interview Question 13: When asked what is required to reach goals, three Group 3 participants mentioned dedication and two mentioned discipline. Individual participants responded with determination, resilience, self-set goals, realistic goals, recognition, celebration, and commitment. Commitment and realistic goals were mentioned by Group 2 and 3 participants—a group with no autonomy and another with total autonomy.

- o Interview Question 14: When asked how they rated their mental health, two Group 3 participants responded with good and individual participants

responded with excellent and very good. When measuring mental health changes pre- and post-experiment, the researcher concluded that Group 3 participants (2) who achieved their goals experienced the same or better mental health. Participants who did not achieve their goals experienced a boost or decline in their mental health. The researcher was unable to find a correlation between goal achievement and mental health condition.

- o Interview Question 15: When asking what they would do differently, Group 3 participants mentioned a fluctuation in their mental health, needing more flexibility, having to rework goals, requiring more time management, creating habits, needing an additional to-do sheet, being organized, and finding the group document helpful. The researcher created the control group document to incite thought into participants' goal journey; based on the Interview question 15 responses, it appears that the document served its purpose.

- o Group Documents: Three Group 3 participants returned their completed group documents—the most in comparison to the experimental groups. Upon reviewing the document, they found three overarching themes: goal planning, program benefits, and reflection. Under the goal planning umbrella, participants mentioned focusing on one goal at a time, frequency promoting accountability, working on goals consistently, having clear measurements, confidence and determination being a goal-setting necessity, brainstorming online, electronic goals (like *Fitbit* and *MyFitnessPal*) encouraging accountability, monthly monitoring progress, incorporating previous knowledge (such as workshops or spreadsheets), managing time, having

incentive and direction, choosing transferrable goals, and recognizing triggers. Under the benefit umbrella, participants identified their goals as SMART and created lifelong processes. Participants considered that life circumstances may alter goal attainment.

Discourse Analysis. In this discourse analysis, the researcher separated positive and negative word usage of Group 3 participants; she also considered potential cultural connections. The researcher uncovered a laundry list of positive words and phrases (and even a couple profound quotes) during the final interviews. Positive words included accountability, planning, motivation, knowledge, commitment, activist, service, community, productivity, achievement, liberating, problem-solving, multi-task, accomplish, agile, better, positive, exciting, privilege, different, habit, important, dedication, determination, resilient, realistic, recognition, celebration, desire, helpful, productivity, easy, flexibility, and focus. Positive phrases included SMART goals, above and beyond, high producer, grow my plan, pick yourself back up, come from within, and learning process. A couple positive responses stood out like "I'm an organized person by nature but a plan helped me work smarter" and "I'm an optimistic person so happiness is inherent."

The list of potentially negative words, phrases, and quotes was much shorter. Potentially negative words were juggling, busy, challenging, emotional, trouble, anxious, correction, distracted, adjust, obstacles, triggers, roadblocks, sacrifice, discipline, and difficult. Potentially negative phrases were multiple reworks, running out of time, and lack of confidence. Although partially true, one participant response could be interpreted negatively: "My mental health was good today, but it varies. It may change tomorrow."

Null Hypotheses

Although the researcher sought 15 total participants (5 per group), pre- and post-experiment participant self-efficacy assessment data calculated Group 1 (n=4), Group 2 (n=2) and Group 3 (n=4) participant quantities; from a qualitative standpoint, the inadequate sample size thwarted theoretical saturation. However, a popular Ashe quote suggested to "start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can" (Quotes about using what you have, n.d., para 1); Yielding to this belief, the researcher completed hypothesis testing for the population means of Groups 2 and 3 (μ_1) and Groups 1 and 3 (μ_2). The researcher's blanket data analysis revealed that self-efficacy grew simply by having a personal development goal-setting plan. She was able to determine if self-directedness played a part in self-efficacy improvements.

Null Hypothesis 1 (μ_1)

There will be no difference in self-efficacy between a control group (Group 3) and an experimental group completing the *Manifest Anything You Want in 30 Days* book (Emanuele, 2013) (Group 2).

μ_1 *Findings.* The population mean (μ_1) was 33.5 (averaging Group 2 and 3's pre- and post-assessment means: 31, 31.75, 34, and 37.25). Individual Group 2 and 3 pre- and post-assessment results (29, 33, 29, 30, 38, 30, 34, 34, 38, 40, 32, and 39) were used as the variables. A 0.5 significance level was utilized to determine the likelihood of rejecting μ_1. A two-tailed test was used to determine the pre- and post-experiment relationship between Group 2 and Group 3 in two directions. A t-test indicated that the t-value was 0.285714 and the p-value was 0.780406. The result was not significant at $p < 0.5$. Therefore, the researcher failed to reject the null, validating the hypothesis (H_0).

Personal development goal-setting does not require self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy; additional data is necessary to prove otherwise.

Null Hypothesis 2 (μ_2)

There will be no difference in self-efficacy between a control group (Group 3) and an experimental group completing *The Self-Directed Goal Theory* (Group 1).

μ_2 *Findings.* The population mean ($\mu 1$) was 33.69 (averaging Group 1 and 3's pre- and post-assessment means: 30.5, 31.75, 35.25, and 37.25). Individual Group 1 and 3 pre- and post-assessment results (33, 29, 28, 32, 29, 30, 38, 30, 36, 30, 36, 39, 38, 40, 32, and 39) were used as the variables. A 0.5 significance level was utilized to determine the likelihood of rejecting μ_2. A two-tailed test was used to determine the pre- and post-experiment relationship between Group 1 and Group 3 in two directions. A t-test indicated that the t-value was -0.002368 and the p-value was 0.998142. The result was not significant at $p < 0.5$. Therefore, the researcher failed to reject the null, supporting the hypothesis (H_0). Once again, personal development goal-setting does not require self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy.

Summary

Based on a qualitative analysis of three data collection methods (surveys, checklists, and interviews), the researcher determined that the demographical majority consisted of women, participants who completed the demographic survey in less than a minute, ranged between the ages of 35-44, completed a Master's degree education, identified as the Black/African American or Caucasian race, were employed full-time (40+ hours per week), resided in the Midwest or South, were married, had zero to one child, and considered their mental health good to excellent.

Pre-assessment, participants responded mostly as moderately true and post-assessment, participants mostly responded as exactly true. Active participant self-efficacy increased 12% from pre- to post-assessment. Ironically, pre-assessment results for omitted and active participants were the same, indicating that self-efficacy had no bearing on completing (or not completing) the experiment. Forty percent of Group 1 and 3 participants completed the entire experiment; Group 2 made up the additional 20%.

The final interview, self-monitoring checklist and group document data exposed additional group themes/patterns. An in-depth grounded theory analysis of Group 1 validated its effectiveness. Participants took part in the experiment for self-gratifying reasons—which, in the researcher's opinion, should be the main catalyst for change. Attained goals fell into multiple personal development areas. Participants of several demographics favored objectivity and reflection. Most importantly, Group 1 participants experienced the most self-efficacy improvements.

When compared to Groups 1 and 3, only half of Group 2's participants completed the entire experiment. Themes/patterns diagnosed possible causes for disparity. For example, participants were externally motivated to take part in the experiment. Many interview responses referenced time, goal choice, and goal execution. Conversely, participants still maintained a positive mindset and achieved their goals.

Group 3 served as the control group, offering participants full autonomy over goal choice and execution—and the results spoke volumes. Participants were internally motivated to take part in the experiment, appreciated their independence, carefully reflected on potential goal barriers, stressed the importance of goal planning, selected

goals in multiple personal development areas, and resolutely strived toward goal achievement.

The culmination of data collection methods yielded four significant findings:

- o Any goal-setting plan applies when endeavoring ambition and/or mental personal development goals.

- o Self-direction does not influence self-efficacy—productivity does.

- o Goal planning and implementation improves self-efficacy.

- o People who perceive themselves to be in excellent mental health may be less motivated toward personal development.

In Chapter Five, the researcher considered this chapter's findings to form conclusions. She utilized previous literature and her findings to offer recommendations on what to research and how to do it. Finally, she responded to three questions about optimal goal timing, ideal goal characteristics, and distinctions between guided and self-directed personal development goal-setting.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Based on the researcher's previous experience, generic personal development goal-setting programs manufacture insipid outcomes.   She dismissed any self-help program that boasted achievement simply by following a step-by-step plan. She believed that idyllic personal development should target the individual—not the majority. So, she crafted her own personal development program, *The Self-Directed Goal Theory*. From a cognitive perspective, self-direction enhances retention and progress (Gureckis & Markant, 2012, p. 469). The researcher's self-directed program placed the ownness on the goal-seeker; the goal-seeker defined their own goals, the soundness of their goals, the virtues complimenting their goals, the time dedication toward their goals, the daily tasks associated with their goals, and their motivation to fulfill each task. Her study investigated whether self-direction maximized self-efficacy.

In the final chapter, the researcher reported on the overarching topic, self-direction augmenting self-efficacy. Based on her findings, she responded to research questions about goal timeframes, goal traits, and guided/self-directed goal-setting differences. The conclusion coupled previous academic labor and current study findings to make future recommendations—conceived by her hits, misses, and shoulda, coulda, wouldas.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Although this study confirmed that goal setting, in itself, championed self-efficacy, the research question responses delivered the study's query understanding.   The query understanding process breaks a search's purpose into tiny pieces, improving overall precision and confidence (Ogilvy, 2019, paras. 7-10). In this case, goal-seekers

translated how long to pursue their goals, what characteristics their goal must entail, and what personal development goal-setting program they connect with. To do this, the researcher identified the following independent and dependent variables:

Independent Variable

Since each group completed different personal development goal-setting programs to improve self-efficacy, they were considered the independent variables.

Dependent Variable

Since self-efficacy was measured pre- and post-experiment, it was considered the dependent variable.

The following research questions were investigated:

Research Question 1 (RQ1)

What is the optimal timing for personal development goal-setting?

RQ1 Findings. For some, timing is everything; in this study, timing unveiled everything. Although the research question related to the timeframe for goal execution, small things like time stamps were also examined. This study's time stamp analysis revealed its significance when completing simple tasks like the demographic surveys, pre-, and post-assessment surveys. Ninety percent of active participants (who completed the entire experiment) crossed demographic boundaries and finished the pre-experiment self-efficacy assessment in three minutes or less versus 62% of omitted participants (who did not complete the entire experiment). Eighty percent of active participants finished the post-experiment assessment in two minutes or less. Time stamp results exposed efficacy levels when completing small tasks—prior to goal execution.

When weighing all groups against each other, timing and time management dominated final interview discussions; reflection, rework, and adaptability were close seconds. Although Group 2 participants mentioned how appealing the 30-day time commitment was, they still admitted to the lack of time.

In the literature review, previous research expressed the need to conduct longitudinal research on goal timing (Brinkman et al., 2020, p. 502). Additional research mentioned specific goal timeframes when discussing individualized personal development planning (Valchanova, 2018, paras. 5-21). The Goal-Setting and Self-Monitoring sub-topics reflected on the adult learner's timetable and pace, suggesting learner knowledge and skill level considerations (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 63; Vogelgesang et al., 2016, p. 479). Cognitive dissonance theories and economical research predicted that people invest time and resources in things they perceive as worthwhile (Booth et al., 2018, p. 3771). Past research also considered goals that require more (or less) time and effort (Setting Realistic Timeframes for Goals, 2007, para. 10; Long-Term and Short-Term Goals, 2021, para. 3). Accordingly, optimal goal timing should last at least 60 days with special considerations for goal choice and revision.

Research Question 2 (RQ2)

With regard to self-efficacy improvement, what is the difference between guided and self-directed personal development goal-setting?

RQ2 Findings. Groups 1 and 2 demonstrated distinct degrees of guidance. Group 1's program offered foundational guidance, whereas it was the core component of the Group 2's program—the difference between leading (Group 1) and managing (Group 2). Definitively, self-direction places the experience in the learner's hands, allowing them to

select their own lessons and steer their own progress (van der Walt, 2019, p. 5). Self-direction encompasses goal setting and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997, para. 70). It can be exhibited in a formal or informal setting. Informally, it improves skills such as stress or time management, problem-solving, and decision-making (Homood Alharbi, n.d., para. 1). The Self-Monitoring sub-topic of this study's literature review exposed its parallels with self-monitoring and internal/external motivation (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 68). The Personal Development Area literature review topic described the human genetic make-up as being abstract, self-governing, and situational (Acevedo, 2018, p. 753). Group 1 participants described the program as comfortable, adaptable, reflective, accountable, and responsible. The marriage of self-direction and personal development goal-setting promises guided autonomy—the freedom of choice with a menu of options.

The researcher's experience with guided personal development goal-setting programs prompted this study. She believed them to be broad and rigid—only rendering minimal results. This study's sub-topic, Andragogy, pointed out that adulthood does not equal self-direction and the sub-topic, Self-Directed Learning, suggested that adults exhibit varying levels of self-directedness—some require step-by-step instructions, and some can effortlessly follow an outline (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 65); guided personal development goal-setting epitomizes the step-by-step, catering to self-directed shortcomings. Based on this study's experimental data, guided programs limit certain personal development areas; two areas experienced goal achievement, spiritual and ambition. It also appealed to verbal and physical learning styles. Most Group 2 participants chose to not self-monitor and exhibited positivity impervious to goal outcomes. Group 2 negatively reflected on apprehension, time management, focus, and

stress. In effect, guided personal development goal-setting supports those with time and self-direction inadequacies, providing comprehensive actions toward certain successes.

Research Question 3 (RQ3)

What specific personal development goal-setting characteristics are necessary to maximize self-efficacy?

RQ3 Findings. For years, personal development goals have been branded with archaic characteristics of being SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound) (Personal Goal Setting, n.d., paras. 10-21). Although, these rules still stand, they are not the end all be all; personal development goals stretch beyond five rules. Based on previous and current literature (this study), the researcher pinpointed a myriad of additional goal attributes—each skyrocketing self-efficacy and inspiring goal fulfillment. The goal-seeker should:

- be self-directed (van der Walt, 2019, p. 5).

- display significant self-efficacy levels when pursuing performance goals (Naudi, 2012; Mejia, & Gushue, 2017, p. 151).

- possess an internal locus of control (Nowicki, 2016, p. 12).

- be self-regulated (Vohs & Baumeister, 2016, p. 183).

- be motivated (Werner et al., 2016; Werner & Milyavskaya, 2019).

- be cultivated (Wilburn, 2007, p. 4).

- identify their resources.

- consider their attitudes, circumstances, and perceptions.

- firmly adhere to their chosen personal development program's directions.

Goals must:

- improve well-being (Locke & Latham, 2006, pp. 266-268).

- be challenging (5 Critical Reasons, n.d., paras. 2-16; Niven & Healy, 2016, p.116).

- have a purpose (5 Critical Reasons, n.d., paras. 2-16; Niven & Healy, 2016, p.116).

- last at least three months for habit formation/termination (not three weeks) (Frothingham, 2019, paras. 1-2).

- be positive (5 Critical Reasons, n.d., paras. 2-16).

- be ethical (5 Critical Reasons, n.d., paras. 2-16).

- be performance-based (4 Characteristics of a Powerful Goal-Setting Process, n.d., paras. 7-9).

- seek personal growth (Lindberg, 2020, para. 1).

- be important to the goal-seeker (Snow & Narvaez, 2019, p. 20).

- be distributed into mini goals (Setting Realistic Timeframes for Goals, 2007, paras. 13-16).

- be transferrable.

- prioritize its mini goals.

- map out goal execution

Goal timing must:

- be at least 60+ days.

- align with the goal (Setting Realistic Timeframes for Goals, 2007, para. 19; Stoewen, 2017, p. 862).

- allot time for reflection and rerouting (123 Success, 2020, paras. 1-2).

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this mixed methods study were as follows:

Hypothesis (H₀)

Personal development goal-setting does not require self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy.

H₀ Findings. Before defining Group 1's self-directed personal development goal-setting program, the researcher examined self-direction as a curriculum versus self-direction as a trait. In the Self-Directed Learning literature review section, the researcher cited an *International Review of Education* journal article when uniting self-directed learning and personal development; it revealed that self-directed learners aspire toward personal development to gain skills for career advancement (Bonk et al., 2015). Experimental data from this study uncovered that ambition personal development goals were achieved in all three groups. *The Self-Directed Goal Theory* identified the ambition personal development area as a desire for rank, fame, or power (Appendix A). Unfortunately, no other personal development areas aligned with self-directed learning as a curriculum.

In the Locus of Control literature review sub-topic, the researcher identified another discrepancy between self-direction and personal development; although she established that goal-seekers are more successful when they possess an internal locus of control (Nowicki, 2016, p. 12), an excerpt from the *Choice or Chance* book disclosed that externals also stick to their goals when they receive external reinforcement (Norwicki, 2016, p. 99). The rudimentary analysis of the personal development area and locus of control topics reinforced the hypothetical argument **(H₀)**.

When evaluating the dependent variable, self-efficacy, further evidence ruled out self-direction as a personal development goal-setting necessity. Hypothesis testing of pre- and post-experiment self-efficacy assessments failed to reject null hypotheses 1 (μ_1) and 2 (μ_2), in turn, solidifying the hypothesis (H_0). Although there were evident self-efficacy improvements across the board, there were no differences in self-efficacy between Groups 1 or 2 when weighed against the control group (Group 3). A personal development goal-setting plan does not need to be self-directed to maximize self-efficacy.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a)

Personal development goal-setting requires self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy.

H_a Findings. Based on a statistical analysis of pre- and post-experiment self-efficacy assessments, the researcher was unable to substantiate her suspicions. Hypothesis testing failed to reject null hypotheses 1 (μ_1) and 2 (μ_2), excluding self-directedness as a goal-seeker characteristic. Self-directedness is an exemplary quality, but it does not halt (or drive) goal success or maximize self-efficacy. The pivotal piece of goal success is to set a plan (any plan really) and doggedly execute it.

Implications for Practice

In this study, the researcher collected/analyzed data based on a two-pronged approach: the overarching objective (the instrumental case study) and grounded theory (*The Self-Directed Goal Theory*). Experimental findings satisfied the overarching objective, determining if personal development goal-setting requires self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy; surprisingly, it does not. This study also effectively embarked on

a journey to discover optimal goal timing and supplementary goal attributes. Future goal-setting studies should carefully contemplate methodology, interviews/focus groups/assessments/surveys/secondary data collection methods, goal-setting program details, and sample size; it can make the difference between robust results and flimsy conclusions.

Refuting the self-direction aspect of personal development goal-setting did not taint grounded theory results. A comparative analysis of all groups (both experimental and control) uncovered that Group 1 participants (who followed *The Self-Directed Goal Theory* program) experienced the most goal success (43%) as opposed to Groups 2 and 3 who both achieved 14% of their goals. Additional Group 1 successes were personal development area flexibility, optimal goal timing, and guaranteed self-efficacy progress. This dualistic approach served well when trying to validate an original theory and gain a holistic view of the study's purpose. On the other hand, when querying from a grounded theory perspective, the researcher had to isolate grounded theory findings from the main objective conclusions; although data overlapped, the results were used differently. Utilizing assessment, interview, and secondary data collection methods, the researcher employed narrative, discourse, and thematic analyses to perform her grounded theory analysis. Had the data collection method been primarily survey-driven, the study may have been easier to administer yet lacking accuracy, deliberation, and participant growth. When conducting future research to authenticate goal-setting theories, the researcher learned that varied data collection methods render rich feedback, performance goals drive participant growth, and, since original theories can be subject to researcher bias (if there is such a thing), data does not lie.

Recommendations for Future Research

Having embarked on this dissertation topic as a passion project, the results cracked countless codes for the researcher (well beyond the research questions). In her eyes, this study shed light on copious topics: the setting view of self-directedness, goal-setting variations, personal development area differences, self-regulation/motivation influences in personal development, etc. Based on her discoveries, future research has the potential to rework methodology, reassess a theory, explore gaps, search for new trends/patterns, address limitations, remediate pitfalls, present new contexts, expand sample sizes, diversify population demographics, and change perceptions. She chewed over what should have, could have, or would have been done.

Shoulda.

The first piece of the ancient three-word colloquium, shoulda, surveyed two sides of the same coin: what would have been a good idea, but the researcher did not do it and what was not a good idea, but the researcher did it anyway. This study utilized two experimental groups (30 and 60 days) and a control group (60 days). Instead of two 60-day groups, a 90-day group would have added an additional layer to the study; specifically, a 90-day control group could have easily given participants a head start to the race—offering free reign to their program, goal amount, and additional timeframe.

On the other hand, despite her better judgement, the researcher made four flawed decisions:

- She did not account for incomplete documentation (self-monitoring checklists and group documents); by adding an additional data collection method (such as a goal-setting survey), she may have been able to make up for the missing data.

- When it came to experiment participation, the $50 raffle served as a monetary external motivating factor. Some participants took part long enough to complete the demographic survey, sign the consent form, and inquire about the raffle drawing. Personal development goal-setting is already a wishy-washy undertaking; participatory reasons outside of personal improvement overlook the most crucial factor—self.

- The researcher appeared to be overly confident about her sample size. True, 15 participants met the criteria for theoretical saturation, but it could not predict goal execution. When participants dropped from the experiment, the study sample did not meet the statistical sample size determination (based on a 729-population size), did not met the quantitative minimum sample size criteria (30), and voided qualitative theoretical saturation. Better results could have been drawn if she used quantitative standards to determine her sample size.

- Unfortunately, under-coverage bias played a part in this experiment. The researcher is Black/African American between the ages of 35-44 near the St. Louis Metropolitan area. Based on the demographic survey, the bulk of potential participants were made up of 59% Black/African American and 56% between the ages of 35-44. Potential participant numbers averaged 1.62 when excluding the St. Louis Metropolitan area; on the other hand, St. Louis Metropolitan area potential participants averaged four. By recruiting participants via social media, the researcher's population size may have mirrored her own. Therefore, future research should investigate the diversity of any population they target.

Coulda

The colloquium's second component, coulda, reflected on guesswork and truth; the researcher either assumed about a past occurrence (or ability) or ignored an actual past occurrence (or ability). Throughout the study, the researcher referenced her personal experience, her frustration with generic personal development goal-setting programs, and her assumption that catering to the individual increased goal achievement. However, she made several adjustments to her original *Self-Directed Goal Theory*— modifying and reworking her plan. Early on, this exposed two things: no matter how self-directed her plan was or how much she reworked, she only experienced goal achievement when she wanted it bad enough. Despite this apparent truth, she reasoned that self-direction and individuality were the secret formulas to her personal successes— and that theory applied to everyone else.

This literature review exposed additional gaps outside of this study's scope (yet still interesting topics) such as:

- A comparative study of children and adult personal development personal development programs would provide a pedagogical and andragogical goal-setting perspective.

- Based on Locke & Latham (2006), some aspects of self-efficacy improvement were orientation, motivation, performance, framing, and complexity (pp. 266-268). A study measuring each aspect against each other would offer more data on what maximizes self-efficacy.

- To date, no personal development areas have been as vetted as Maslow's primordial hierarchy of needs. A definitive study, establishing new (and proven areas), would be provide a modern perspective.

- A comparative study, targeting different self-help products and services (such as e-books, online courses, coaching programs, webinars, academies, universities, masterminds, masterclasses, conferences, and mobile apps) would provide even more data on the goal-seeker and the personal development goal (Trevor, 2021, para. 1).

- An exploration of learning goals, autonomy goals, and macro-level goals could uncover the goal type most associated with goal attainment (Locke & Latham, 2006, pp. 266-268).

- An evaluation of goal sources (like being assigned by others, set jointly through participation, and self-set) could reveal which favors goal success the most (Locke & Latham, 2006, p. 265).

- The researcher identified a pattern among participant interview responses; they were more motivated and enthusiastic when personal development goals were transferrable. A future study that weighs specific goals against transferrable goals could lend to more data on goal attainment drivers.

- Goal-seeking, in general, unites three disciplines: education, psychology, and philosophy. In the future, a personal development goal-setting longitudinal study (60+ days) could be conducted, utilizing an experimental group comprised of 30 or more participants. Exploratory research can be evaluated from an educational, psychological, and philosophical viewpoint.

- Previous scholarly research discussed the effects of having too many goals at once (McCarther, 2018, p. 445). This information sparked Interview Question 6 (What is your opinion on tackling one goal or multiple goals at once?). Unfortunately, interview responses were unrestricted—with no pronounced choice. By conducting research, conclusions can be drawn on optimal goal amounts.

- Previous research within this study's literature review debunked the three-weeks-to-form-a-habit rule, suggesting that creating (or abandoning) a habit can take up to 254 days (Frothingham, 2019, paras. 1-2). The researcher was unable to locate additional literary research on making/breaking habits. Fundamental research would be helpful to establish precise habit timing.

- Although the researcher employed an original self-monitoring checklist for data collection, participants were only encouraged to complete it—not required. A future comparative analysis would be helpful to determine if self-monitoring maximizes self-efficacy or goal achievement. Ideally, the analysis would compare two groups pursuing the same personal development goal-setting program—one requiring the use of a self-monitoring checklist and the other not requiring it.

- To rule out potential participants with an external locus of control or self-regulatory failure, the researcher included two disqualifying demographic survey questions. Previous research indicated that both impede goal pursuit; however, the researcher was unable to find any research challenging this fact. This gap leaves room for future historical research.

Woulda

The third colloquium part, woulda, was based purely in fantasy—what the researcher would have done if she had the means and/or knowledge. Based on this study's experimental data, the researcher drew the following conclusions: Participants were able to pick their desired meeting platform.   Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited in-person meetings and some participants chose to meet via phone. Not only do in-person or video platforms deliver a more relaxed atmosphere, but they also introduce another data collection opportunity—the ability to examine nonverbal gestures.

Additional observations were made regarding the demographic overpopulation, flawless self-efficacy scores, moral behavior, and timestamp connections.

- Since the researcher used convenience sampling via social media, she did not have the luxury of disqualifying participants to avoid demographic overpopulation. Social media recruitment was slow and sporadic; she was appreciative to recruit the 29 potential participants she did.

- One study participant scored a perfect self-efficacy score during pre-assessment, nullifying the post-assessment; of course, this participant also reached her goal. Had this been considered, the researcher could have introduced an additional disqualifying factor during the pre-assessment—impeccable scores with no growth potential.

- A popular McRaven quote said, "if you can't do the little things right, you will never do the big things right" (McRaven, n.d., para. 1). The researcher shared the same belief; she associated this thought process to overall moral behavior,

postulating that virtue cultivation enhances goal success. However, only one

Group 1 participant practiced a virtue during the program. Little to no research

proved that virtue cultivation maximizes goal achievement and personal

experience offered inadequate validation.

- Additionally, the initial question asked during participant recruitment surrounded

   time commitment. Also, at first glance, the researcher identified one significant

   demographic survey result, time stamps; she observed that participants who took

   longer to finish the survey, did not complete the entire experiment.

Conclusion

Exposing the Fine Print

Beneath the Andragogy campaign, the personal development/adult education

comparisons, the *Self-Directed Goal Theory* introduction/analysis, the distinction

between guided and self-directed personal development, the experiment's systematic

logic, the meticulous dissection of the demographic survey, the qualitative interview

analysis, the quantitative deduction of the pre- and post-self-efficacy assessments, and the

overall culmination of data, lies the 10 esoteric realities of this dissertation. Historically,

the number 10 symbolizes transformation, completeness, finality, all-embracing, and

action (Oldale, 2020, paras. 1-8); the researcher can only hope that its symbolism

translates as actuality. The researcher's sentiments drove each emerging reality; they

were:

1. Despite popular opinion, Andragogy is endearing. Its main component, self-

   directed learning, reaches internal and external environments. Self-direction,

   striped down to its simplest form, personifies personal development goal-setting.

2. Self-directed learning and self-directedness may visually favor but they are not the same. Self-directed learning is a curriculum component and self-directedness is a state of being. In a coloring book, self-direction would be the solid outline, guiding self-directed learners to stay within. Self-directed learning aids one personal development area (ambition). Self-direction helps overall personal development. Neither self-directed learning nor self-direction guarantee (or hinder) goal achievement.

3. Self-directedness has several levels; although it does not affect overall goal success, the gray area may still affect resilience during the goal journey.

4. As it relates to personal development, several terms lead with "self" but not all start with it. Self-directed learning, self-direction, self-help, self-regulation, self-control, self-efficacy, self-concept, self-improvement, self-esteem, self-set, self-monitoring, self-expectancy, self-determination, and self-development all stagger between being instinctive or acquired.

5. Motivation trumps everything. When goal performance lacks vigor or finality, motivation will always be the culprit. Motivation is a decision (one made internally or externally, but a decision nonetheless). Motivation failures occur for numerous reasons such as the chosen goal, life circumstances, time, or emotions—and the goal-setting program, self-directedness, self-efficacy, or personal reflection are all inconsequential.

6. The research presented personal development goal-setting from three perspectives: educational, psychological, and philosophical. It may be possible

that personal development can be analyzed from even more disciplines/angles. Another set of eyes may be able to see what one did not.

7. Personal experiences play a HUGE part in current beliefs and future actions. Even though the experiment confirmed it and the data backed it up, the researcher still had faith in the individualistic (self-directed) and moral (virtue) elements of personal development goal-setting. Besides, when she introduced self-direction and virtue into her own personal development, goal achievement followed.

8. Allowing space for goal revision (in addition to the established 60-day minimum) is imperative during goal execution. Directions may shift, focus may change, time may need adjustment, etc.

9. When the researcher determined that personal development goal-setting does not require self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy, it voided research question two. A comparison of development goal-setting programs is immaterial if the rule is to follow any program.

10. The researcher's established goal-seeker, goal, and goal timing characteristics were specific. They were well supported by previous literature and current data. But she questioned if there is a such thing as too specific. If the goal-setting program did not matter, how can exact characteristics be listed confidently?

The Researcher's Commentary

Quotes were used throughout this dissertation because the researcher believed it expressed her thoughts in simple phrases. This study, in a nutshell, conjured up one of her favorite quotes; it read, "the more you learn, the more you know that you know nothing" (Ayn Rand Quotes, n.d., para. 1). This can be interpreted in two ways—both

absolutely true. On one side, research leads to more research. Previous research offers

quality recommendations or leaves unintended gaps. The experimental data reveals

trends/patterns, debunks assumptions, or sparks curiosity.   On the flip side, research and

data can produce a result so far-fetched that the researcher's enthusiasm falters. It almost

simulates a child's discovery of a fiction Santa Claus, Easter Bunny, or Tooth Fairy; it

was so remarkable when the belief existed but, when it was gone, so was the significance.

This notion does not suggest that all was in vain though; for one, the indissoluble value

(self-direction) of Andragogy was solidified. The research and data added to its personal

development goal-setting predecessors, uncovering a slew of recommendatory potentials.

Most importantly, the researcher's original *Self-Directed Goal Theory* was envisioned,

amended, tested, verified, and participant-edited; based on the insightful research

findings and the valuable participant feedback, more research can be conducted, and the

theory can be tweaked to appeal to larger audiences.

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Appendix A

Group 1 - The Self-Directed Goal Theory Program/Worksheet

<u>OVERVIEW</u>

This program focuses on two phases: plan and action. The planning phase lasts for two weeks. In this time, you will follow STEPS 1 - 23 in the workbook below to thoughtfully create a plan that works for you. For the remaining six weeks, you will act on your plan.

This program is self-directed and life-centered. This means that you determine your own goals based on what you need. To help you achieve your goals, the researcher developed a new formula called the Self-Directed Goal Theory. The formula states that:

1 *Personal Development Area Focus* + 1 *SMART Goal* + 1 *Virtue Focus* + 21 *Daily Tasks* + 21 *Daily Motivators* = **GOAL ACHIEVEMENT**

Let's break down each part of this formula! As you read, I encourage you come up with ideas for each part. You won't make your official selections until later on in your planning.

PART 1: *Personal Development Area Focus*

In this program, you must set two goals for yourself. Goals fall within six personal development areas. Your two goals must focus on two separate personal development areas.

- Ambition – your desire for rank, fame, or power
- Mental – your emotional response to your external reality
- Physical – your health or outward appearance
- Self – your personal interests
- Social – your relationships with others
- Spiritual – your religious values

PART 2: *SMART Goal*

The two goals you set must be considered **SMART**.

1. **S**pecific –   you know who is involved, what you need, when you need it, why you need it and what's required to do it
2. **M**easurable – you can measure your progress
3. **A**chievable – you have the tools and skills needed to be successful
4. **R**elevant – you believe that it will help you grow
5. **T**ime-Bound – you believe progress can be made in 60 days

  NOTE: When selecting personal development goals, please avoid goals that threaten your safety, compromise your health or violate the law.

PART 3: *Virtue Focus*

Studies show that practicing virtue develops your confidence and improves your well-being. In the action phase of this program, you must select two virtues to practice. Your selected virtues should complement your chosen goals.

1. Justice – treating others fairly
2. Service – being helpful to others
3. Courage – standing up for what is right

4. Gratitude – appreciating what you have
5. Courtesy – valuing and respecting others
6. Moderation – avoiding excess or extremes
7. Honesty – being open and truthful with others
8. Greatness – doing great things with confidence
9. Industriousness – being a devoted, hard worker
10. Purposefulness – having a clear focus and vision
11. Patriotism – honoring and respecting your country
12. Foresight – considering consequences before acting
13. Tact – being empathetic and understanding to others
14. Meekness – being calm, teachable, patient, and humble
15. Respect – having healthy regard for yourself and others
16. Good Counsel – seeking advice from reasonable people
17. Docility – being open to new ideas, learning and growing
18. Loyalty – being faithful or devoted to someone or something
19. Sincerity – being who you really are and expressing yourself
20. Generosity – giving to someone freely, willingly, and cheerfully
21. Truthfulness – Acting in a way that inspires confidence and trust
22. Friendliness – showing kindness, warmth, and goodwill to others
23. Prayerfulness – taking time to pray, meditate or simply be mindful
24. Obedience – submitting to authority without hesitation or resistance
25. Kindness – being genuinely concerned about the well-being of others
26. Peacefulness – being calm, satisfied and content no matter what happens
27. Forgiveness – letting go of hurt and resentment and allowing yourself to heal
28. Self-Control – managing your desires and wants to achieve something greater
29. Good Judgment – making sound decisions based on experience and reflection
30. Helpfulness – doing thoughtful things that make a difference in the lives of others
31. Responsibility – fulfilling your duties and taking accountability for your words and actions
32. Patience – being able to tolerate delay, trouble or suffering without getting angry or upset
33. Perseverance – Doing what it takes to complete something despite any obstacles you face
34. Orderliness – doing what you should do, when you need to do it and how it should be done
35. Modesty – not talking about or trying to make people notice your abilities and achievements
36. Tolerance – accepting other people's preferences and ideas without compromising your own
37. Leadership – motivating others to act toward a common goal while utilizing sound decision-making
38. Humility – being confident without being arrogant and maintaining self-respect despite what others think
39. Wisdom – considering the consequences of your decisions before acting or speaking and acting accordingly
40. Assertiveness – setting appropriate boundaries, asking for help when you need it and being confident in your abilities

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PART 4: *Daily Tasks*

A task is a small step you take to reach your goal. During the 6-week action phase of this program, you will be assigning yourself 42 daily tasks—that's 21 tasks per goal. You will be asked to complete 1 task per day. Task selections should range from easy to difficult.

PART 5: *Daily Motivators*

Motivators get you excited about completing your daily task. In the action phase of this program, you will also be assigning yourself 42 daily motivators. Every daily task requires a daily motivator.

Now that we've worked through the formula, it's time to start planning. If you have any questions throughout the program, please don't hesitate to contact the researcher.
REMEMBER: You only have two weeks to complete STEPS 1-23.

STEP 1: Type or write down today's date in the empty box below.

What is today's date?	

STEP 2: Please answer the discovery questions below. These questions will help you to identify your existing needs and/or aspirations.

What are your fears?	
What gives you anxiety?	
What is holding you back?	
What would you like to know?	
What makes you uncomfortable?	
What do you lack willpower with?	
What are you procrastinating on?	
What are you unwilling to let go of?	
What are you being distracted from?	
What are you lacking the budget for?	
What do you believe you're not good at?	
What have you had trouble focusing on?	
What have you started and never finished?	
What are you waiting on the right time to do?	
What are you afraid to make a mistake with?	
What do you have to constantly remind yourself of?	
What do you want to do but don't know where to start?	

STEP 3: In 24 hours, review your discovery question responses and add anything else you think of.

STEP 4: From your responses, circle (or write down on a separate piece of paper) **anything** that stands out as a potential goal.

STEP 5: Write (or type) your potential goals in the table below (in STEP 11). Try to find at least 10 of them. If you already have a specific goal in mind, feel free to include it as an option.

STEP 6: In the Ranking column of the table (in STEP 11), rank your potential goals from 1 to 10—1 being most important and 10 being least important. You can only select a number once.

STEP 7: In the Personal Development Area column of the table, write down (or type) the personal development area you feel the potential goal aligns with. Those areas include:

- o Ambition – your desire for rank, fame, or power
- o Mental – your emotional response to your external reality
- o Physical – your health or outward appearance
- o Self – your personal interests
- o Social – your relationships with others
- o Spiritual – your religious values

STEP 8: In the SMART column of the table, indicate whether your potential goal is SMART by circling YES or NO. Remember that SMART goals are:

1. Specific – you know who is involved, what you need, when you need it, why you need it and what's required to do it
2. Measurable – you can measure your progress
3. Achievable – you have the tools and skills needed to be successful
4. Relevant – you believe that it will help you grow
5. Time-Bound – you believe progress can be made in 60 days

If it doesn't meet all 5 requirements, it is not considered SMART and you must circle NO.

STEP 9: Now, cross out any potential goals that you circled NO in the SMART column.

STEP 10: Take a look at your top two ranking potential goals. Are they in the same personal development area? If they are different, you are finished selecting your two SMART goals and can skip to STEP 12.

STEP 11: This program seeks to improve two personal development areas in 60 days. If your top two ranking potential goals are in the same personal development area, select the next in line with a different personal development area (remember to follow the ranking). Once you have three goal options, it's up to you to select the final two.

Potential Goal	Ranking *(circle a number)*	Personal Development Area	Is your goal SMART? *(circle Yes or No)*
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		YES NO
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		YES NO
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		YES NO
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		YES NO
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		YES NO
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		YES NO
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		YES NO
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		YES NO
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		YES NO
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		YES NO

STEP 12: Write the two SMART goals you selected below.

STEP 13: Earlier, we mentioned that you must also select two virtues to work on for the next 6 weeks. Review the below virtues and their definitions. Then, write (or type) the two virtues you want to practice below. Your selected virtues should your chosen goals (for example, if your goal is to create and stick to a budget, your virtue might be moderation).

1. Justice – treating others fairly
2. Service – being helpful to others
3. Courage – standing up for what is right
4. Gratitude – appreciating what you have
5. Courtesy – valuing and respecting others
6. Moderation – avoiding excess or extremes
7. Honesty – being open and truthful with others
8. Greatness – doing great things with confidence
9. Industriousness – being a devoted, hard worker
10. Purposefulness – having a clear focus and vision
11. Patriotism – honoring and respecting your country
12. Foresight – considering consequences before acting
13. Tact – being empathetic and understanding to others
14. Meekness – being calm, teachable, patient, and humble
15. Respect – having healthy regard for yourself and others
16. Good Counsel – seeking advice from reasonable people

SMART Goal #1	
SMART Goal #2	

17. Docility – being open to new ideas, learning and growing
18. Loyalty – being faithful or devoted to someone or something
19. Sincerity – being who you really are and expressing yourself
20. Generosity – giving to someone freely, willingly, and cheerfully
21. Truthfulness – Acting in a way that inspires confidence and trust
22. Friendliness – showing kindness, warmth, and goodwill to others
23. Prayerfulness – taking time to pray, meditate or simply be mindful
24. Obedience – submitting to authority without hesitation or resistance
25. Kindness – being genuinely concerned about the well-being of others
26. Forgiveness – letting of hurt and resentment, allowing yourself to heal
27. Peacefulness – being calm, satisfied and content no matter what happens
28. Good judgment – making sound decisions based on experience and reflection
29. Helpfulness – doing thoughtful things that make a difference in the lives of others
30. Self-control – managing your desires and wants to achieve something greater
31. Responsibility – fulling your duties and taking accountability for your words and actions
32. Patience – being able to tolerate delay, trouble or suffering without getting angry or upset
33. Perseverance – Doing what it takes to complete something despite any obstacles you face
34. Orderliness – doing what you should do, when you need to do it and how it should be done
35. Modesty – not talking about or trying to make people notice your abilities and achievements

36. Tolerance – accepting other people's preferences and ideas without compromising your own
37. Leadership – motivating others to act toward a common goal while utilizing sound decision-making
38. Humility – being confident without being arrogant and maintaining self-respect despite what others think
39. Wisdom – considering the consequences of your decisions before acting or speaking and acting accordingly
40. Assertiveness – setting appropriate boundaries, asking for help when you need it and being confident in your abilities

STEP 14: Research shows that it takes at least 21 days to form a habit. In the table below, list 30 easy or difficult tasks you can complete to achieve SMART Goal #1. We will narrow each list down later.

HELPFUL TIP #1:
When coming up with tasks, it's a good idea to ask yourself, "Why haven't I achieved this goal already?" You can also reference your responses to the STEP 1 questions to come up with task ideas. For example, if your SMART goal is to be more extroverted, then a couple tasks might be to strike up a conversation with a stranger or join a social group. If your SMART goal is to lose 20 pounds, your task might be to record your food/beverage intake in a food diary or eliminate one unhealthy food per week.

Virtue #1	
Virtue #2	

HELPFUL TIP #2:
Remember to create easy or difficult tasks. When considering difficult tasks, be sure to challenge yourself. Your most difficult task should include doing something you cannot imagine— something that makes you uncomfortable. Overcoming challenges can improve confidence and grow your skill and knowledge.

SMART Goal #1 Tasks	Ranking *(circle a number)*
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		25	26	27	28	29	30
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	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		25	26	27	28	29	30
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		25	26	27	28	29	30
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		25	26	27	28	29	30
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		25	26	27	28	29	30
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		25	26	27	28	29	30
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		25	26	27	28	29	30
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		25	26	27	28	29	30
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		25	26	27	28	29	30
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		25	26	27	28	29	30
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		25	26	27	28	29	30
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16

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17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
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25	26	27	28	29	30		

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25	26	27	28	29	30		

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	Ranking
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	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

STEP 15: In the table below, list 30 easy or difficult tasks you can complete to achieve SMART Goal #2. We will narrow each list down later.

SMART Goal #2 Tasks	Ranking *(circle a number)*
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30		
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30		
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9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30		
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9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30		
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30		

STEP 16: Now that you've created your tasks, it's time to rank them. In both tables above, rank your potential tasks from 1-30—1 being easy to complete and 30 being difficult to complete. Be sure to rank the tables (SMART Goal #1 & #2) separately. You can only select a number once.

STEP 17: In the tables above, cross out any tasks ranked 22-30.

STEP 18: In the order you ranked them (1 – 21) in the SMART Goal #1 Tasks table above, write down (or type) your SMART Goal #1 tasks in the Task column of the highlighted lines below.

Day	Date	Check (√) once complete	Task	Virtue
1				
1				
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42				

STEP 19: In the order you ranked them (1 – 21) in the SMART Goal Task #2 table above, write down your SMART Goal #2 tasks in the Task column of the highlighted lines above.

STEP 20: The blank, white lines in the Task table above are reserved for motivators—they support you and help you achieve your task. Everyone encourages themselves in their own way—some pray, meditate, recite affirmations, journal, read a quote, etc. Only you know what works for you. In the blank spaces in the table above, add your own motivator.

STEP 21: Now that you've added tasks and motivators to the table above, it's time to schedule your dates. For 42 consecutive days, you should be completing one task and one motivator. Add your dates to the blank spaces in the table above.
Your plan start date should not exceed two weeks past your STEP 1 response.

SPECIAL NOTE:
You must complete the task on the date you assign it. It's a good idea to set some sort of reminder for yourself to complete your daily tasks/motivators.
Each time you have trouble with or fail to complete a task on the date assigned, you must answer the Self-Monitoring Checklist.

STEP 22: Virtue is the final column to complete in the table above. On the odd days, add in Virtue #1 that you selected in STEP 13. On the even days, add in Virtue #2. Virtues aren't carefully planned like tasks are. Practicing your virtue doesn't have to be a physical action; it can be done with an intentional thought. I encourage you to complete the Self-Monitoring Checklist any day you experience a breakdown (or even a breakthrough) as it relates to your virtue practice.

STEP 23: **CONGRATULATIONS!** You are done planning and ready for action! Use the Task table (in STEP 18) as your daily action guide, checking off each task/motivator/virtue once you complete it. Be sure to read The SPECIAL NOTE below before you start working your plan! Be sure to send this Program Worksheet back to the researcher once complete.

Appendix B

Group 2- 30-Day Program

Overview: Manifesting is the act of wanting something and then bringing it into reality. In other words, you don't just dream it; you achieve it. With the help of this program, you will be able to manifest any attainable/reachable goal you have. Before you begin the program, remember to:

- Let go of worry.
- Put yourself first.
- Release all stress.
- Say no when necessary.
- Have fun daily.
- Be in control of your mind.
- Be open to new thought processes.
- Be positive—no negativity is allowed.
- Stay away from others who are negative.
- Let go of *how* good things will come to you.
- If there is a place you dread, stay away from it.
- Pay close attention to your thoughts and words.
- Meditate whenever your mind starts to be scattered.
- Focus only on the positive and all forms of abundance.
- Not have or listen to negative discussions with anyone.
- Not use words like want, need or will, instead use the words 'have' or 'am.'
- Cancel out negative thoughts by replacing them with a positive affirmation.
- Avoid TV, radio, news, newspapers, and the internet if it becomes negative.
- Put a rubber band on your wrist and snap it when you think or say a negative word.
- Daydream as much as you can, envisioning that you already have what you are manifesting.

Guide:
You must complete the task on the <u>exact</u> date you assign it; you cannot make a task up on a different date. Each time you have trouble with or fail to complete a task, you must complete the Self-Monitoring Checklist.

Day	Date	Check (√) once complete*	Task
1			In the Date column of this table, assign specific dates to your daily tasks.
1			Pick one attainable/reachable goal to manifest and write it on your worksheet. Be specific and detailed.
1			Visualize your goal, create a make-believe story on how you manifested it and write it down on your worksheet.
1			Think of positive affirmations for your goal and write them on your worksheet. Make your affirmations believable by using definite phrases like "I am" or "I have."
1			Write down any fears you have about attaining your goal on your worksheet. Then,

			write the fear down again, changing it to a positive affirmation.
1			Think of one area of your life that you are grateful for and write it on your worksheet.
2			All day long, say, "I am worthy of *{insert your goal here}*.
2			Imagine what type of emotions you will encounter when you achieve your goal. Write them down on your worksheet.
2			Look in the mirror and add read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
3			Make a conscious effort to smile all day long. Smile to yourself and anyone you encounter.
3			On your worksheet, write down all the things in life that make you happy.
3			Draw smiley faces all day.
3			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
4			Think of one thing you can treat yourself to today (above and beyond what you would usually do). Write it down on your worksheet.
4			Treat yourself to what you wrote down.
4			Think about your most amazing life. Write down what that looks like on your worksheet.
4			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
5			Write your goal down (as a positive affirmation) on a separate, small piece of paper.
5			Put the paper (with your goal written on it) under a candle and keep it there.
5			Light the candle and say your goal aloud. Then say, "So it is."
5			Write a number 8 sideways on a separate, small piece of paper. Then, place the paper where you feel will draw your goal. *For example, if you desire money, place the paper where you keep your money.*
5			Draw the number 8 sideways all day while visualizing you achieving your goal.
5			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.

6			On your worksheet, write down what you are most afraid of when it comes to achieving your goal. Be very detailed.
6			On your worksheet, write down why you have not already achieved your goal. Be very detailed.
6			On your worksheet, write down what belief system you need to let go of what might be holding you back from achieving your goal. Be very detailed.
6			On your worksheet, write down a reverse fear statement, mentioning the opposite of the fears you wrote down. *For example, if your goal involves money but your parent taught you that money is the root to all evil, write down that money grows on trees.*
6			Associate a positive response to your fears. Beside each fear you wrote down, write something positive on your worksheet. *For example, if your goal involves money but you're afraid that you will become selfish and spoiled when you get it, write down that you will be giving and kind.*
6			Aloud, yell at your fear like it's an ugly monster. Tell it that you are more powerful than it and you do not fear it anymore. Then, close your eyes and imagine it shrinking until it disappears.
6			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
7			Find a quiet place, set an alarm for 5-10 minutes and meditate. To do so, simply close your eyes, take some deep breaths, and turn off your brain for a little while. While doing so, visualize white light entering your head and going through your entire body and then coming out the soles of your feet.
7			Place a bowl of water in each room of your house. Put three tealight candles in each bowl and light them. Do not blow out the candles; let them burn out themselves. Once they burn out, put the tealights under water, throw them in a trash can outside of your house and dump the water down the toilet.
7			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
8			Visualize exactly what you want from your goal, how it feels and achieving it for 10

			minutes. Be creative with your visualizations *For example, if your goal involves money, visualize it raining money.*
9			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet. While you're saying them, visualize two things. Visualize scooping your affirmations into your heart. Then, visualize being surrounded by a bubble with all the affirmations going in it and the bubble growing.
9			Come up with a few more spontaneous affirmations and say them aloud in the mirror.
10			On your worksheet, write a story in past tense of you achieving your goal. Your story should be detailed, describing your emotions and how easy it was to achieve your goal. Then, sign your name at the end of the story.
10			Put your story in a sealed envelope and give it to someone you trust. Let the person know that this is an exercise to help you practice manifesting.
10			Imagine yourself in a theater stage, playing out the story you wrote. Then, write down on your worksheet what that looks like *(i.e.: how did you feel, what the stage looked like, how big was the audience, did they applaud you, etc.)*
10			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
11			Watch a funny movie to promote a positive mood.
11			Visualize that your life is better and filled with laughter.
11			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
12			Create a vision board to promote and manifest your beliefs and desires. Be as creative as you'd like—whatever brings a smile to your face. A vision board is a collection of pictures and words. It can be done on a large piece of cardboard or poster board. Cut out pictures/words from books, magazines, or newspapers. You can also print out your favorite affirmation/s and add them to the vision board. Then, place the

			completed vision board somewhere you will see it daily.
12			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
13			Do a negativity detox—that means getting rid of newspapers, not surfing the Internet, and turning off negative things on TV (including the news).
13			Do not allow ANY negative thinking all day. If a negative thought enters your mind, say the word "CANCEL" out loud.
13			Do an internal detox. You can research and select your own detox.
13			Take a bath with Epsom salt.
13			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
13			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
14			De-clutter one room in your home. Plan to sell, donate, give away or throw away all the items you get rid of.
14			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
14			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
15			Practice gratitude. Do so by thinking of everything you are grateful for and saying the words, Thank You, aloud.
15			Say hello to a stranger.
15			Perform an act of kindness of your choosing.
15			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
15			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
16			Love the area of your life you want to manifest. Do this by saying aloud what you love about it.
16			On your worksheet, write down a list of what you love about your life right now.
16			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
16			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
17			Schedule a celebration with someone to celebrate you already attaining your goal.

			During your celebration, talk about your accomplishment as if it's already happened. Have fun with this task!
17			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
17			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
18			Before you go to bed, visualize how you feel after you've accomplished your goal.
18			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
18			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
19			On your worksheet, write about your goal using the words, "I have" or "I am." Be very specific about your goal.
19			Place your hands in front of your face. Visualize that what you want is in your hands and that your hands are magnets pulling you toward your goal.
19			Before you go to bed, visualize how you feel after you've accomplished your goal.
19			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
19			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
20			Act on your goal. *For example, if your goal is a new car, go to the dealership and test drive new cars. If your goal is more money, write a list of what you will buy with the money. Be creative with your action.*
20			Before you go to bed, visualize how you feel after you've accomplished your goal.
20			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
20			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
21			Pamper yourself! *For example, this action may include a spa visit, reading a book or simply taking a peaceful walk.*
21			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
21			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.

22			Clear your energy by adding Epsom salt to a bath, saging your home, playing upbeat music in a particular negative energy room (even if you're not in there) or adding real plants or a water fountain to a certain portion of any room (where you feel negative energy).
22			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
22			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
23			Play healing music (possibly Classical or New Age). You can even play music you love to take your mind off things. Turn up the volume as well!
23			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
23			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
24			Explore your creativity by doing something creative you wouldn't usually do. You can take a dance lesson, scrapbook, draw a picture or cook a new dish—anything really!
24			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
24			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
25			Get some support by hosting a manifesting night at your home. Invite 2-3 encouraging friends over to support each other's dreams. You all will be celebrating achievements that have **NOT** occurred yet.
25			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
25			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
26			Film yourself living your goal. *For example, if you desire money, you might want to record yourself dressed well, drinking champagne.* Telling your story on video is quite powerful.
26			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
26			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.

27			Have a magic day by creating a magic wand (or even a pencil will do). Think of yourself as a magician and imagine that what you want has appeared out of thin air. Then, create an altar (it can be anything). Put your vision board (and anything else representing your dream) on your altar. Now, draw a circle on a piece of paper and write what you want inside the circle, including your full name). *For example, if you want money, you will write in the circle, "John/Jane Doe has a bank account balance of $1 million."* Place the paper at your altar. Now, take your wand and wave it over your altar, saying aloud what you wrote down three times. You can wave your wand as many times as you want in the future.
27			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
27			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
28			Proceed through this day as if your goal has already been achieved.
28			On your worksheet, write down things that you noticed coming into your life since your goal was achieved.
28			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
28			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
29			Explore acceptance by sitting or laying down with your palms facing up. Close your eyes and say out loud, "I am open and ready to accept *{insert your goal here}* into my life now." Then, say, "Thank you for giving me *{insert your goal here}.*
29			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
29			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
30			Have an attitude of gratitude by giving yourself a pat on your back! Applaud the good in your life and take a few minutes to be grateful for what you've been given. Then, on your worksheet, write a list of what you are grateful for.

30			Look in the mirror and read aloud the affirmations you wrote on Day 1 of your worksheet.
30			Review the vision board you created on Day 12.
30			Make plans to return this completed program to the researcher.

Make plans to return this completed program to the researcher.

Appendix C

Group 2- 30-Day Worksheet

Overview: Manifesting is the act of wanting something and then bringing it into reality. In other words, you don't just dream it; you achieve it. With the help of this program, you will be able to manifest any attainable/reachable goal you have. Before you begin the program, remember to:

- Let go of worry.
- Put yourself first.
- Release all stress.
- Say no when necessary.
- Have fun daily.
- Be in control of your mind.
- Be open to new thought processes.
- Be positive—no negativity is allowed.
- Stay away from others who are negative.
- Let go of *how* good things will come to you.
- If there is a place you dread, stay away from it.
- Pay close attention to your thoughts and words.
- Meditate whenever your mind starts to be scattered.
- Focus only on the positive and all forms of abundance.
- Not have or listen to negative discussions with anyone.
- Not use words like want, need or will, instead use the words 'have' or 'am.'
- Cancel out negative thoughts by replacing them with a positive affirmation.
- Avoid TV, radio, news, newspapers, and the internet if it becomes negative.
- Put a rubber band on your wrist and snap it when you think or say a negative word.
- Daydream as much as you can, envisioning that you already have what you are manifesting.

This worksheet will be used along with the 30-day program. Per the task's instructions, fill in the blank boxes to the right of each daily task.

Day 1:

Write down (or type) one attainable/reachable goal to manifest. Be specific and detailed.	

Day 1:

Create a make-believe story on how you manifested your goal.	

Day 1:

Write down (or type) positive affirmations for your goal. Make your affirmations believable by using definite phrases like "I am" or "I have." **NOTE:** You will be asked to reference this task daily going forward.	

Day 1:

Write down (or type) any fears you have about reaching your goal. Then, write the fear down again, changing it to a positive affirmation.	**Fears**	**Positive Affirmation**

Day 1:

Write down (or type) one area of your life that you are grateful for.	

Day 2:

Write down (or type) the type of emotions you will encounter when you achieve your goal.	

Day 3:

Write down (or type) all the things in life that make you happy.	

Day 4:

Write down (or type) one thing you can treat yourself to today (above and beyond what you would usually do).	

Day 4:

Write down (or type) what your most amazing life looks like.	

Day 6:

Write down (or type) what you are most afraid of when it comes to achieving your goal. Be very detailed.	

Day 6:

Write down (or type) why you have not already reached your goal. Be very detailed.	

Day 6:

Write down (or type) what belief system you need to let go of that might be holding you back from achieving your goal. Be very detailed.	

Day 6:

Write down a reverse fear statement, mentioning the opposite of the fears you wrote down in the task above.	

Day 6:

Write down (or type) something positive—opposite of what you wrote down, mentioning the opposite of the fears you wrote down in the belief systems task.	

Day 10:

Write (or type) a story in past tense of you achieving your goal. Your story should be detailed, describing your emotions and how easy it was to achieve your goal. Then, sign your name at the end of the story.	

Day 10:

Imagine yourself in a theater stage, playing out the story you wrote. Then, write down (or type) what that looks like.	

Day 16:

Write (or type) a list of what you love about your life right now.	

Day 19:

Write (or type) about your goal using the words, "I have" or "I am." Be very specific.	

Day 28:

Write down (or type) things that you noticed coming into your life since your goal was achieved.	

Day 30:

Take a few minutes to be grateful for what you've been given. Then, write (or type) a list of what you are grateful for.	

Make plans to return this completed worksheet to the researcher.

Appendix D

Group 3: Control Group Program

<u>**OVERVIEW**</u>

The Control Group has full autonomy in the goal-setting process. Participants in this group independently determine their personal goal/s and how they will reach them in 60 days. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the researcher.

NOTE: Each day you struggle with completing your task or goal, you must complete the Self-Monitoring Checklist.

Answer the researcher's questions below to provide more information on your goal/s selection and planning process. It is helpful if you include as much detail as possible in your responses. Please return this document to the researcher once complete.

<u>**SELECTING A GOAL**</u>

What do you believe is necessary to reach any personal goal?	
In 60 days, how many goals do you plan to reach and why did you select this amount?	
How do you plan to identify your personal goal/s?	
Have you done any brainstorming before selecting your goal? If so, what did you find out?	
What personal goal/s did you select?	
Why do you feel that the personal goal/s you selected is important?	
Does your goal/s align with an existing need and/or aspiration of yours?	

What personal development area does your goal/s align with?
    o *Ambition – your desire for rank, fame, or power*
    o *Mental – your emotional response to your external reality*
    o *Physical – your outward appearance*
    o *Self – your personal interests*
    o *Social – your relationships with others*
    o *Spiritual – your religious values*	

Do you believe that the goal/s you selected are SMART? • **S**pecific – you know who is involved, what you need, when you need it, why you need it and what's required to do it • **M**easurable – you can measure your progress • **A**chievable – you have the tools and skills needed to be successful • **R**elevant – you believe that it will help you grow • **T**ime-Bound – you believe progress can be made in 60 days	

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Do you feel that timeframes play a part in reaching a goal? If so, please explain why.	
Do you feel that frequency plays a part in reaching a goal? If so, please explain why.	
What type of process did you choose?	
Why do you feel that this process will best assist you in reaching your goal/s?	
In the past, have you completed a process like the one you chose? If so, what was your experience with it?	
How long is your process?	
How often will you be working your process?	
Are there any daily tasks associated with your program? If so, define them and how easy or difficult they are.	
How do you plan to motivate yourself to reach your goal/s?	
How will you track progress?	

Appendix E

Author Permission Message

The below permission was transcribed from *Facebook Messenger*. The dissertation topic was slightly modified post-approval to include the researcher's original program, *The Self-Directed Goal Theory,* and shift the focus from self-actualization to self-efficacy.

<u>Tara</u>
Hi Vickie:

Thank you for accepting my friend request. I just recently purchased your book, *Manifest Anything You Want in 30 Days*, and I would look to utilize it for my dissertation—so I figured I'd message you to request permission. I am requesting permission to include in my doctoral dissertation excerpts of the following resource:

Book: Manifest Anything You Want in 30 Days
Author: Vickie Emanuele

My dissertation topic, *A Mixed Methods Study of Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Actualization*, is part of the requirement needs to graduate from the Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership- Andragogy program at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, MO. At this time, my dissertation study is slated for completion in Fall 2020.

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, to the electronic publication of my dissertation by Lindenwood University, and the prospective publication of my dissertation by ProQuest. ProQuest may supply copies of my dissertation on demand. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you. Please reply to this message, confirming that you are the copyright owner of the work and if permission is granted to include it in my dissertation. A citation and permission statement will appear in my dissertation.

If you do not control the copyright on the above-mentioned work, please provide any contact information regarding the proper rights holder.

Thank you for your consideration. If you require further information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Tara N. Strickland

Phone:
Email:

<u>Vickie</u>
Hi, wow that's awesome. Will any of this be for profit?

<u>Tara</u>
Thank you SO much for responding. I love your book! No, it won't be for profit. It's just being used in my research for my dissertation.

<u>Vickie</u>
Ok, what do you need me to sign?

<u>Tara</u>
It doesn't require a signature. I just need your written permission. I will need to provide a printout of your permission to the dissertation committee. They require it to make sure we are giving credit to any author we include. I think the permission can be granted here or via email.

<u>Vickie</u>
I give you permission to use as dissertation.
Anything else you need?

<u>Tara</u>
Thank you SO much!

<u>Vickie</u>
Welcome.
Have a magical night.

Appendix F

Social Media Recruiting Flyer

IRB – 21 59
Date Approved: 12/17/2020
Expiration Date: 12/16/2021

A Study for Adults to Strengthen Goal Success

WOULD YOU LIKE TO REACH YOUR HIGHEST POTENTIAL?

If you are over the age of 18 years old, this study may be for you.

If you are interested in participating or have additional questions, please contact me via:
- Instant/Direct Message
- Phone at █████████
- Email at ██████████████

I am looking for adults 18 years and older who want to increase the chances of achieving their goals.

Studies show that goal-setting improves well-being. Yet, it does not show how goal-setting should look. This research seeks to reveal the exact tools required to boost goal achievement.

Participants will be asked to:
- Follow a goal-setting program for 30-60 days
- Attend 2 meetings before and after the experiment
- Complete 2 self-efficacy* assessments before and after the experiment

Participants who choose to join will:
- Increase their chances of achieving their goals
- Create a plan for reaching their highest potential
- Be entered into a $50 Visa/Mastercard gift card raffle

Are you eligible?
- 18 years old or older
- Seeking goal achievement
- Be willing to complete a shore demographic* survey
- Reside anywhere in the U.S.

Lindenwood University
School of Education, Educational Leadership

*Definitions:
1. Demographic – The characteristic of people in a certain area or group.
2. Self-efficacy – It increase your emotional well-being by helping you perform what is necessary to get what you want.

Appendix G

Lindenwood Staff Recruiting Email

TO: Lindenwood Staff
FROM: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
CC: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Would you like to reach your highest potential? If so, this study may be
             for you.

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Tara N. Strickland and I am a current Lindenwood EdD graduate student. I am

conducting dissertation research on my topic, *The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment: A*

Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy. Studies

show that goal-setting improves well-being. Yet, it does not show how goal-setting should look.

My research seeks to reveal the exact tools required to boost goal achievement.

I am looking for adult participants who want to increase the chances of achieving their

goals.

Are you eligible?
- 18 years old or older
- Seeking goal achievement
- Reside anywhere in the U.S.
- Be willing to complete a short demographic survey

Participants will be asked to:
- Follow a goal-setting program for 30-60 days
- Attend 2 meetings before and after the experiment
- Complete 2 self-efficacy assessments before and after the experiment

Participants who choose to join will:
- Increase their chances of achieving their goals
- Create a plan for reaching their highest potential
- Be entered into a $50 Visa/Mastercard gift card raffle

If you are interested in participating or have additional questions, please contact me via phone at

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ r email at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix H

Demographic Survey

The purpose of this experimental study is to explore the theory that goal-setting programs require self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy. Thank you for expressing your participation interest in this experiment.

This demographic survey allows the researcher to describe participants and better analyze their data. All responses are strictly confidential.

Based on the questions below, please respond with the most appropriate information about yourself. There are 11 questions in this survey. Each question should only have **ONE** answer.

1. What is your gender?
- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

2. What is your age?
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to say

3. What is the highest degree or level of school you completed?
- Some High School
- High School degree or equivalent
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate
- Trade School
- Prefer not to say

4. What is your ethnicity?
- Black/African American
- Caucasian
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or Pacific Islander
- Asian
- Two or More
- Other/Unknown
- Prefer not to say

5. What is your current employment status?

- Employed full-time (40+ hours per week)
- Employed part-time (less than 40 hours a week)
- Unemployed (currently looking for work)
- Unemployed (not currently looking for work)
- Student
- Retired
- Self-employed
- Unable to work
- Prefer not to say

6. What is your zip code? (fill-in-the-blank)

7. What is your marital status?
- Single (never married)
- Married
- In a domestic partnership
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Prefer not to say

8. How many children do you have?
- None
- 1
- 2-4
- More than 4
- Prefer not to say

9. In general, how would you rate your mental health (mood and/or stress level)?
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Prefer not to say

10. Do you believe that you primarily determine your own outcomes?
- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

11. Will you do your best to guide your feelings, monitor your behavior and think effectively to reach your goal/s?
- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Appendix I

Demographic Survey Initial Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: █████████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Research Study Information

Good Evening:

Thank you for expressing interest in my research study. I am a current Lindenwood EdD graduate student, conducting dissertation research on my topic, **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment**: *A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy*. Studies show that goal-setting improves well-being. Yet, it does not show how goal-setting should look. My research seeks to reveal the exact tools required to boost goal achievement.

Prior to the experiment, all interested participants must complete a short demographic survey. The survey is used to obtain population-related and participant characteristics. The survey does include disqualifying questions.

Please complete the demographic survey by Monday, December 28. To complete the survey, click on the link below. Once the survey is reviewed, I will contact you via email regarding next steps.

If you have additional questions, please contact me via phone at ██████████ or email at ██████████████████

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix J

Demographic Survey Follow-up Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ███████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Demographic Survey Follow-up Email

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you for your interest in my research study: **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment***: A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy.*

All interested participants must complete the demographic survey. The survey allows me to obtain population-related and participant characteristics.

I'm sending this follow-up email to find out if you are still open to participating. If so, I've attached the demographic survey for you to complete by {insert date here}. Once the completed survey is reviewed, I will contact you via email regarding next steps.

If you have additional questions, please contact me via phone at ████████████ or email at ██████████████████

{attach (or include link for) demographic survey}

Thanks,

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix K

Completed Demographic Survey Response Email

TO: Potential Participant
FROM: █████████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Thank you for completing the demographic survey!

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert potential participant's name here}:

Thank you for taking the time to complete the demographic survey! Collectively, survey responses allow me to learn about the entire population. But your response allows me to learn more about you as an individual participant.

I will be contacting you soon to go over next steps. Please note that it could take 3-4 weeks to begin the experimental study. In the meantime, please contact me via phone at ████████████ or email at ████████████████████ if you have any questions.

I deeply appreciate you taking interest in my research study!

Thank you,

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix L

Ineligibility Reference Email/Tool

TO: Selected Participant

FROM: ████████████████████

DATE: TBD

SUBJECT: Research Study Raffle Winner Notification

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you for expressing interest in my research study: **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment**: *A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy*. Participants are a researcher's most value resource and I appreciate you offering to share your time.

<u>Congratulations, you've won the $50 Visa/Mastercard Gift Card raffle!</u>

Please contact me via phone at 3█████████ or email at ██████████████████ to discuss how you'd like your gift card delivered. I am open to delivering via mail or in-person.

Please respond to this email, confirming that you received it successfully.

Thanks again,

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix M

Selected Participant Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ███████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Research Study- Next Steps

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you for your continued interest in my research study: **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment**: *A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy.*

You have been selected as a study participant!

Before we begin the experiment, I have one more request. To participate in the study, you must read and sign a Research Study Consent Form. This form provides you with detailed information, allowing you to make an informed decision about participating in my research study.

The first page of the consent form outlines different group options within my experimental study. You have the option to select a desired group or wait to be placed in one. If you decide to select a group, I urge you to do so ASAP; future group placement will be based on availability. I've listed the group options below for quick reference.

> *Groups options are:*

- **Group 1:** Complete my original self-directed, goal-setting program, The Self-Directed Goal Theory. In this program, you will be asked to select 2 goals. The program is broken into 2 phases: plan (lasting 2 weeks) and action (lasting 6 weeks). In the action phase, you must complete daily, self-directed tasks.

- **Group 2:** Complete a 30-day goal-setting program from the book, Manifest Anything You Want in 30 Days by Vickie Emanuele. In this program, you will be asked to select 1 goal. You must complete daily, assigned tasks.

- **Group 3:** Complete a goal-setting program of your choice. Your progress will be monitored throughout the program (at the 30-day and 60-day mark).

Please complete the attached consent form by {insert date here}. Once you email the signed form, I will contact you via email regarding next steps.

If you have additional questions, please contact me via phone at ███████████ or email at ███████████████████

Please respond to this email, confirming that you received it successfully. Once again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix N

Adult Informed Consent Form

The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment: *A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy*

Before reading this consent form, please know:

- Your decision to participate is your choice
- You will have time to think about the study
- You will be able to withdraw from this study at any time
- You are free to ask questions about the study at any time

After reading this consent form, we hope that you will know:

- Why we are conducting this study
- What you will be required to do
- What are the possible risks and benefits of the study
- What alternatives are available if the study involves treatment or therapy
- What to do if you have questions or concerns during the study

---

Basic information about this study:

- The purpose of this experimental study is to explore the theory that personal development goal-setting requires self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy.

- During the experiment, participants will be asked to follow a goal-setting program for 30-60 days, attend two meeting before and after the experiment and complete two self-efficacy assessments before and after the experiment.

- Potential risks of participation include loss of privacy, difficult emotions, and physical health (based on goal/s set & COVID-19) Strategies are in place to reduce potential risks.

- The researcher will utilize 3 groups (5 people each) to conduct research. Although participants may be in the same group, all experimental work will be done alone. Groups are defined as:
    - *Group 1:* Complete the researcher's original self-directed, goal-setting program, The Self-Directed Goal Theory. You will be asked to select two goals. This program is broken into two phases: plan (2 weeks) and action (6 weeks). In the action phase, you must complete daily, self-directed tasks.
    - *Group 2:* Complete a 30-day goal-setting program from the book, Manifest Anything You Want in 30 Days by Vickie Emanuele. You will be asked to select one goal. You must complete daily, guided tasks throughout the experiment.
    - *Group 3:* Complete a goal-setting program of your choice. Your progress will be monitored throughout the experiment.

Research Study Consent Form

The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment: *A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy*

You are asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Tara N. Strickland under the guidance of Dr. Sherrie Wisdom at Lindenwood University. Being in a research study is voluntary, and you are free to stop at any time. Before you choose to participate, you are free to discuss this research study with family, friends, or a physician. Do not feel like you must join this study until all your questions or concerns are answered. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form.

Why is this research being conducted?
We are doing this study to explore the theory that personal development goal-setting requires self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy. We will be asking 15 people to answer these questions.

What am I being asked to do?
• Complete and submit a demographic survey.
• Read and sign the Adult Informed Consent Form.
• Pre-experiment, complete and submit a self-efficacy assessment.
• Pre-experiment, attend an in-person/phone/virtual 1-on-1 meeting with the researcher to discuss your role/expectations.
• During the experiment, follow your specific group's guidelines.
• If necessary, complete the Self-Monitoring Checklist during the experiment to identify potential roadblocks.
• During the experiment, communicate with the researcher to discuss progress/questions.
• Post-experiment, attend an in-person/phone/virtual 1-on-1 meeting with researcher to answer questions and go over your experience.
• Post-experiment, complete the same self-efficacy assessment issued pre-experiment.
• Review the assessment comparison results and 1-page Overcoming Reference Tool.

How long will I be in this study?
Participation can range from 30-60 days depending on the group.

Who is supporting this study?
This study does not require financial support.

What are the risks of this study?

- *Privacy and Confidentiality*
  o We will be collecting data that could identify you, but each survey response will receive a code so that we will not know who answered each survey. The code connecting you and your data will be destroyed as soon as possible.

- *Psychological Risks*
  o A psychological risk (experiencing feelings of disappointment or failure) may occur if participants do not achieve their personal development goal/s or do not improve their self-efficacy. During the experiment, the researcher will encourage participants to reference completed self-monitoring checklists to recognize trends and obstacles.

- *Physical Risks*
  - o Based on the participant's chosen personal development goal/s, there may be physical risks involved. To mitigate this risk, the researcher has included the following statement in the footer of each group's documents: *When selecting personal development goals, please avoid goals that threaten your safety, compromise your health, or violate the law.*
  - o It is also important to mention the current COVID-19 pandemic as a potential risk to physical health. The researcher offers a Meeting Platform Document for the initial meeting and final interview. This document provides participants with multiple platform options (virtual, phone or in-person).

What are the benefits of this study?
You may benefit from this study. The potential benefit is improving your self-efficacy. Self-efficacy improvements do not guarantee goal achievement—but it does increase the odds.

Will I receive any compensation?
Although this experiment does not offer compensation, those who choose to participate will be added to a $50 gift card raffle. The raffle winner will be announced and awarded one week after the 60-day experiment completion.

What if I do not choose to participate in this research?
It is always your choice to participate in this study. You may withdraw at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions or perform tasks that make you uncomfortable. If you decide to withdraw, you will not receive any penalty or loss of benefits. If you would like to withdraw from a study, please use the contact information found at the end of this form.

What if new information becomes available about the study?
During this study, we may find information that could be important to you and your decision to participate in this research. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

How will you keep my information private?
We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. We do not intend to include information that could identify you in any publication or presentation. Any information we collect will be stored by the researcher in a secure location. The only people who will be able to see your data are: members of the research team, qualified staff of Lindenwood University, representatives of state or federal agencies.

How can I withdraw from this study?
Notify the research team immediately if you would like to withdraw from this research study.

Who can I contact with questions or concerns?
If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or concerns about the study, or if you feel under any pressure to enroll or to continue to participate in this study, you may contact the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board Director, ███████████ at ███████████████████████████████████ You can contact the researcher, Tara N. Strickland, directly at ███████████████████████████████ You may also contact Dr. Sherrie Wisdom at ███████████████████████

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   **Date**

_____

Participant's Printed Name

_____   _____

Signature of Principle Investigator or Designee   **Date**

_____

Investigator or Designee Printed Name

Appendix O

Research Study Consent Form Follow-up Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ██████████████████████u
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Research Study 1-on-1 Availability Follow-up Email

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you for your continued interest in my research study: **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment***: A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy*.

Before joining the research study, all participants **must** read and sign a Research Study Consent Form. The form provides participants with detailed study information, allowing you to make an informed decision.

I'm sending this follow-up email to find out if you are still open to participating. If so, I've attached the consent form for you to complete by {insert date here}. Once you email the signed form, I will contact you via email regarding next steps.

If you have additional questions, please contact me via phone at ██████████ or email at ██████████████

{attach the Adult Informed Consent Form}

Thanks,

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix P

Signed Consent Form Response Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ███████████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Thank you for signing the Research Study Consent Form!

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you for taking the time to read and sign the consent form!

Before we begin the study, I would like to meet with you 1-on-1 to give you the tools you need and let you know what is required of you (as a participant).

I've attached a Meeting Platform Document to select three meeting date/time preferences and your desired meeting platform (in-person, via phone or virtually).

Please return the completed document by Tuesday, January 5 (*you are also welcome to call/text me at the below number with this information*). Once I receive your availability and meeting preference, I will send a meeting invitation.

If you have additional questions, please contact me via phone at ███████████ or email

at ████████████████████

I appreciate you taking interest in my research study!

Thank you,

Appendix Q

Research Study 1-on-1 Availability Follow-up Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ██████████████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Research Study 1-on-1 Availability Follow-up Email

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you for choosing to participate in my research study: **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment**: *A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy*.

Before we begin the study, I would like to meet with you 1-on-1, In this meeting, I'll give you the tools you need and let you know what is required of you (as a participant). This meeting can take place in-person, via phone or virtually (*we can iron out the meeting details later*). Right now, I just need to know what your availability looks like.

Please respond with a few date and time options to meet 1-on-1 by {insert date here}. Once I receive your availability, we can discuss meeting details and scheduling.

If you have additional questions, please contact me via phone at ███████████ or email

at ███████████████████████

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix R

Confirmed 1-on-1 Availability Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Thank you for providing your 1-on-1 availability!

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you for responding with your availability! It's time to iron out the details of our 1-on-1 meeting. Per our request, we will meet on {insert day of the week, date here}.

In the previous email, I mentioned that we can meet in-person, via phone or virtually.

Please complete the Meeting Platform Document and email it back by {insert date here}. Once I receive your completed document, I will send the formal 1-on-1 meeting invitation.

If you have additional questions, please contact me via phone at ■■■■■■■ or email

at ■■■■■■■■■■■

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix S

Meeting Platform Document

Select your desired meeting platform.	In-person ☐	Telephone ☐	Virtual ☐
	Type your preferred location below. ———————— Click or tap here to enter text.	Type your preferred number below. ———————— Click or tap here to enter text.	Pick your preferred virtual platform from the dropdown menu below. ———————— Choose an item.
Please list three preferred dates & times to meet.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Appendix T

Research Study 1-on-1 Meeting Platform Follow-up Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: █████████████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Research Study 1-on-1 Meeting Platform Follow-up Email

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you for your continued interest in my research study: **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment**: *A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy*.

{insert Before we begin the study, (or) Now that you are reaching program completion here}, I would like to meet with you 1-on-1 to {insert give you the tools you need and let you know what is required of you (as a participant) (or) interview you about your participant experience and go over closing information here}. I just need to find out your preferred meeting place and meeting platform.

I'm sending this follow-up email to find out if you are still open to participating. If so, please email the completed Meeting Platform Document by {insert date here}. Once I receive your completed document, I will send the formal 1-on-1 meeting invitation. The blank document is attached.

If you have additional questions, please contact me via phone at █████████ or email

at █████████████████

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tara N. Strickland

{attach Meeting Platform Document}

Appendix U

Research Study 1-on-1 Invitation

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ███████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Research Study {insert 1-on-1 Meeting (or) Final Interview here} Invitation

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you for taking part in my research study: **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment***: A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy.*

Our 1-on-1 meeting is scheduled to take place on {insert day of week, date here}. It will be conducted {insert in-person, via phone (or) virtually here}. {for in-person: insert the address to the meeting location is {insert address, city, state, zip code here}. here}. {for phone: insert I will be contacting you at {insert phone number here}. here} {for virtual: The virtual meeting will take place via {insert Facebook Messenger, FaceTime, Google Duo, Microsoft Teams, Skype or Zoom here}.The meeting information is {insert meeting ID, etc. here}. here} The attached agenda outlines topics we will cover during our meeting.

{insert this sentence for the final interview only: If you have not already emailed your completed group program/worksheet, please be sure to print and bring it to the final interview. To maintain confidentiality, **<u>do not</u>** include your name on the completed program/worksheet.

Please accept this invitation by {insert date here} to confirm you received it and plan to attend. If you need to reschedule or have additional questions, please contact me via phone at ███████████ or email at █████████████████

I look forward to meeting with you!

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix V

Researcher's Initial Meeting Talking Points

STUDY PURPOSE

- The purpose of this experimental study is to explore the theory that personal development goal-setting requires self-directedness to maximize self-efficacy.
    - Self-efficacy involves how people engage in activities and overcome adversity. It impacts behavior and contributes to the regulation of emotional well-being.

GROUPS

- There are three groups (5 people each) included in this experimental study.

- Although participants may be in the same group, all experimental work will be done alone.

- If you haven't already selected a group, I will assign one based on availability.

- Here's the breakdown of the groups:

    - *Group 1:* Complete my original self-directed, goal-setting program, The Self-Directed Goal Theory. You will be asked to select two goals. This program is broken into two phases: plan (2 weeks) and action (6 weeks). In the action phase, you must complete daily, self-directed tasks.

    - Review Group 1 with participant.
        - In the planning phase, you will be asked to complete 23 steps over the course of 2 weeks. The steps help you identify quality goals and create a detailed action plan to pursue them.
        - In the action phase, you will complete daily tasks associated with your action plan—2 tasks per day (to be specific).
        - The Self-Directed Goal Theory contains a 5-part formula. Each part is explained in detail.
            - ➢ 1 *Personal Development Area Focus* + 1 *SMART Goal* + 1 *Virtue Focus* + 21 *Daily Tasks* + 21 *Daily Motivators* = **GOAL ACHIEVEMENT**

    - *Group 2:* Complete a 30-day goal-setting program from the book, Manifest Anything You Want in 30 Days by Vickie Emanuele. You will be asked to select one goal. You must complete daily, assigned tasks throughout the experiment.

    - Review Group 1 with participant.
        - The program and corresponding worksheet is separate.
        - In the program, you will assign your own dates and check off tasks as they are completed.
        - Dates must be consecutive.
        - You will notice that the left column indicates what Day your task falls on.
        - You can have multiple tasks on a particular day; tasks range from 1 to 7 per day.
        - You will use the worksheet to perform some daily program tasks. The program will let you know when it's time to use the worksheet.

- o *Group 3:* For 60 days, you will complete a goal-setting program of your choice. Your progress will be monitored throughout the experiment (at the 30 and 60-day mark).

- o Review Group 3 with participant.
  - ▪ In this group, you will independently select a program and your goals.
  - ▪ You will determine how many goals you will tackle at once.
  - ▪ The program document includes a list of questions you will need to answer. Unlike other groups, you will need to answer the questions (9 questions on selecting a goal & 10 questions on your planning process) and return the completed document to me at the final interview. It gives me additional background on the program you choose.

- You will be returning your completed worksheets to me once the experiment is complete. I encourage you to print it and bring it with you to the final interview.
- To maintain confidentiality purposes, do not include your name on your completed worksheet.
- When do you plan to start?

SELF-MONITORING CHECKLIST

- Review checklist template with participant.
  - o Use this checklist to monitor your behavior toward daily tasks you must complete. This will help you spot potential obstacles while pursuing your personal goals.
  - o This document is automated, allowing you to select dates from a calendar and click on behaviors that apply/experiences for that date.
  - o Each template includes 19 behaviors/experiences.
  - o One template can be used for 9 days.

- It is only mandatory to complete when you fail to complete or struggle with a daily task.
- If you happen to complete one during the experiment, I encourage you to print one each completed checklist and bring it with you to the final interview.
- To maintain confidentiality purposes, do not include your name on any completed checklists you print.
- The completed checklists will not be collected. However, they will be referenced during the final interview.

SELF-EFFICACY ASSESSMENT

- The final step (before beginning the experiment) is to complete a self-efficacy assessment.
- There are no right or wrong answers—the assessment simply determines your current self-efficacy level.
- After today's meeting, I will email the information for the pre-experiment Self-efficacy Assessment.
- I will be administering the same self-efficacy assessment before and after the experiment.
- The post-experiment assessment identifies any self-efficacy changes. I will send both completed assessments after the final interview for your review.

COMMUNICATION

- Optional Participation—can stop anytime
- The primary form of communication I will use throughout this experiment is email. Please let me know if you have an alternative preference.
- It's important to be as responsive as possible throughout the experiment—specifically in the beginning and the end.
- Near the end of the experiment, I will email you to schedule the final interview
- Most emails will ask for your confirmation. I understand that sometimes an email can be missed or go to a Spam folder. Because of this, I will follow-up on any unconfirmed emails (with another email). If it is still not confirmed, I will discontinue communication. You can still reach out to me to continue the experiment.
- During the experiment, I will email you to check-in but responses are not mandatory unless you have questions or feedback.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- I talked a little about the final interview but I'd like to go over why it's conducted. The purpose of the final interview is to learn about your experiment experience.
- Do you have any questions?
- If you have questions at any time, please feel free to contact me via email at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or phone at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

- All participants who choose to participate in my experiment will be entered into a $50 Visa/Mastercard gift card raffle. Approximately one week after experiment completion (Day 60), the drawing will take place. Raffle tickets will be marked by first and last name initials only and drawn by a third party. The winning participant will be contacted via email/social media/phone regarding their winning raffle. Non-winning raffle participants will not be contacted. Based on the winner preference, I will make plans to mail or deliver the $50 gift card in person.

Appendix W

Initial Meeting Agenda

{insert confirmed date here}
{insert 1-hour start and end meeting time here}
Meeting called by the researcher, Tara N. Strickland

Attendees: {insert participant's name here}

{insert 10-minute start and end topic time here}	**Introduction** • Study Purpose • Self-Efficacy Definition

---

{insert 10-minute start and end topic time here}	**Group Information** • Basic Experiment Information • Group Overviews

---

{insert 10-minute start and end topic time here}	**Self-Monitoring Checklist** • Checklist Walk-Through

---

{insert 10-minute start and end topic time here}	**Self-Efficacy Assessment** • Description • When It Occurs

---

{insert 10-minute start and end topic time here}	**Communication** • Primary Communication Channel • Communication Frequency • Self-Efficacy Assessment Detail

---

Additional Information:

In the last 10 minutes, we will briefly cover final interview details, questions, my contact information, and the post-experiment raffle.

Appendix X

Research Study 1-on-1 Invitation Acceptance Follow-up Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ██████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Research Study {insert Initial Meeting (or) Final Interview Acceptance here} Follow-up Email

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you for taking part in my research study: **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment**: *A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy*.

Our {insert initial meeting (or) final interview here} is scheduled to take place on {insert day of week, date here}. It will be conducted {insert in-person, via phone (or) virtually here}. {for in-person: insert the address to the meeting location is {insert address, city, state, zip code here.} here}. {for phone: insert I will be contacting you at {insert phone number here.} here} {for virtual: The virtual meeting will take place via {insert Facebook Messenger, FaceTime, Google Duo, Microsoft Teams, Skype or Zoom here. here}.The meeting information is {insert meeting ID, etc. here.} here} The attached agenda outlines topics we will cover during our meeting.

Please accept this invitation by {insert date here} to confirm you received it and plan to attend. If you need to reschedule or have additional questions, please contact me via phone at ██████████ or email at ████████████████

I look forward to meeting with you!

Tara N. Strickland

{attach meeting agenda}

Appendix Y

Self-Monitoring Checklist

Use this checklist to monitor your behavior toward daily tasks you must complete. Select the date and click on each experience you identify with.
This will help you spot potential obstacles while pursuing your personal goals.

Did you…	Click here and select a date from the dropdown menu.	Click here and select a date from the dropdown menu.	Click here and select a date from the dropdown menu.	Click here and select a date from the dropdown menu.	Click here and select a date from the dropdown menu.	Click here and select a date from the dropdown menu.	Click here and select a date from the dropdown menu.	Click here and select a date from the dropdown menu.	Click here and select a date from the dropdown menu.
Feel alone	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Procrastinate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feel awkward	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Get distracted	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Doubt yourself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Not feel ready	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Experience fear	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Need willpower	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have a bad day	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Run out of time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Make an excuse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feel overwhelmed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Require more focus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Need more confidence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack available resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have communication issues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Require support or guidance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Experience embarrassment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feel like it was unimportant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix Z

The General Self-Efficacy Assessment

About: This scale is a self-report measure of self-efficacy.

Items: 10

Reliability: Internal reliability for GSE = Cronbach's alphas between .76 and .90

Validity: The General Self-Efficacy Scale is correlated to emotion, optimism, work satisfaction. Negative coefficients were found for depression, stress, health complaints, burnout, and anxiety.

Scoring:

	Not at all true	Hardly true	Moderately true	Exactly true
All questions	1	2	3	4

The total score is calculated by finding the sum of all items. For the GSE, the total score ranges between 10 and 40, with a higher score indicating more self-efficacy.

Reference:

Schwarzer, R. & Jerusalem, M. (1995). The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE). In Weinman, J., Wright, S. & Johnston, M., Measures in health psychology: a user's portfolio. Causal and control beliefs. Windsor, UK: NFER-NELSON.

	Not at all true	Hardly true	Moderately true	Exactly true
1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix AA

Self-Efficacy Assessment Follow-up Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ██████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Self-Efficacy {insert Pre-Assessment (or) Post- Assessment here} Follow-up Email

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you so much for meeting with me on {insert meeting date/time here}! During our {insert meeting (or) final interview here}, I mentioned that self-efficacy increases your emotional well-being by helping you perform what is necessary to get what you want.
9
In my study, I am exploring if different goal-setting programs improve self-efficacy. To measure this, I need your help by completing a Self-Efficacy Assessment before and after the experiment. The pre-assessment {insert evaluates (or) evaluated here} your current self-efficacy level. The post-assessment reveals potential changes. {insert As a reminder, assessment comparisons will be provided at the end of the experimental study. only during pre-assessment}

I'm sending this follow-up email to {insert find out if you are still open to participating. If so, please complete the Self-Efficacy Assessment by {insert date here} (or) ask you to complete the Self-Efficacy Assessment by {insert date here}. here} Once you email the completed {insert pre-assessment (or) post-assessment here}, I will {insert contact you via email regarding next steps (or) email the assessments for your review}.

Once again, thank you for your continued interest in my research study: **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment**: *A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy.*

If you have additional questions, please contact me via phone at ████████ or email

at ██████████████

Thank you,

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix BB

Completed Self-Efficacy Post-Assessment Response Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ███████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Self-Efficacy Assessment Comparison Email

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you for completing the Self-Efficacy Post-Assessment!

Self-efficacy increases your emotional well-being by helping you perform what is necessary to get what you want. I conducted this study to explore how different goal-setting programs improve self-efficacy. You played a key role in accomplishing this goal by completing the Self-Efficacy Assessment before and after the experiment.

I have attached the results of both (pre & post) assessments for your review. I've also attached an Overcoming Reference Tool to provide additional guidance on improving self-efficacy and achieving future goals. If you have additional questions, please contact me via phone at ███████████ or email at ██████████████████

Please respond to this email, confirming that you received it successfully.

Once again, thank you for taking part in my research study: **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment***: A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy*. I hope you found it beneficial!

Thank you,

Tara N. Strickland

{attach Overcoming Reference Tool}

Appendix CC

Research Study Check-In Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ███████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Research Study Check-In

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

I'm just checking in to see how the {insert Group 1/2/3 here} experiment is going for you!

Please let me know if I can answer any questions or assist with anything to enhance your participant experience. I can be contacted via phone at ████████ or email at ███████████████

You do not need to respond to this email—I'm just checking on your progress.

Once again, thank you for participating in my research study. I hope you're finding this

experimental study beneficial.

Thank you,

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix DD

Research Study Group 1- Action Phase Check-In Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ██████████████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Research Study Group 1- Action Phase Check-In

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

At this point in the Group 1 program, the planning phase should be nearly complete, and you are about to enter the action phase. I'm reaching out to check your progress and find out if you have questions.

Please let me know if I can assist with anything to enhance your participant experience. I can be contacted via phone at ████████████ or email at ████████████████████

You do not need to respond to this email—I'm just checking on your progress.

Once again, thank you for participating in my research study. I hope you're finding this

experimental study beneficial.

Thank you,

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix EE

Research Study Program Completion Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ██████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Research Study Program Completion

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in my research study: **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment***: A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy*. I hope you've found it beneficial!

Now that your program is coming to an end, it's time to schedule the final interview.

During the interview, I will ask a few questions to learn more about your participant experience and provide additional experiment closing information. The interview can take place in-person, via phone or virtually (*we can iron out the meeting details later*). Right now, I just need to know what your availability looks like.

Please respond with a few date and time options to meet by {insert date here}. Once I receive your availability, we can discuss meeting details and scheduling.

If you have additional questions, please contact me via phone at 3██████████ or email

at ██████████████████

Once again, thank you for participating in my research study.

Thank you,

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix FF

Research Study Final Interview Availability Follow-up Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ███████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Research Study Final Interview Availability Follow-up

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in my research study: **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment***: A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy*. I hope you've found it beneficial!

Since you've completed your {insert Group 1/2/3 here} program}, I would like to schedule a final interview to learn more about your participant experience and provide additional experiment closing information. This meeting can take place in-person, via phone or virtually.

I'm sending this follow-up email find out when you are available to meet. Please respond by {insert date here} with a few date and time options for the final interview. Once I receive your availability, we can discuss meeting details and scheduling.

If you have additional questions, please contact me via phone at ███████████ or email

at ██████████████████

Once again, thank you for participating in my research study.

Thank you,

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix GG

Final Interview Agenda

{insert confirmed date here}
{insert 60–90-minute start and end meeting time here}
Meeting called by the researcher, Tara N. Strickland

Attendees: {insert participant's name here}

{insert 10–15-minute start and end topic time here}	**Introduction** • Final Interview Timing • Interview Format

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{insert 40–60-minute start and end topic time here}	**Interview Questions** • Potential Follow-Up Questions

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{insert 10- 15-minute start and end topic time here}	**Closing Information** • Participant Questions/Feedback • Post-Experiment Self-Efficacy Assessment • Self-Efficacy Comparison Email • Overcoming Reference Tool • Raffle Drawing • My Contact Information

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Appendix HH

Final Research Interview Document

Timing
- The entire interview will last for 30-45 minutes.
- We will discuss interview format information first.
  (listed below).
- Then, I will ask interview questions.
- Lastly, I will cover any program closing information and next steps.

Interview Format
- The purpose of the final interview is to learn about the participant's experiment experience.
- The entire interview will last for 30-45 minutes (depending on our conversation).
- Interview questions have been prepared ahead of time.
- There is a total of 15 interview questions.
- Based on your responses, I may need to ask follow-up questions to get additional information or make sure I clearly understand.
- Your responses help me understand your opinions, thoughts and/or feelings.
- I will be taking notes during our discussion.
- If you need to get in touch with me after the interview, you can contact me via email at ███████████████████ phone at ██████████
- During the interview, feel free to ask questions at any time.
- Do you have any questions before we get started?

Standard Questions
11. What motivated you to participate in this experiment?
12. What group did you participate in and why?
13. How did you feel about your group's timeframe?
14. What was/were the personal development goal/s you selected? Did you achieve it/them?
15. What is the easiest way for you to learn?
16. What is your opinion on tackling one goal or multiple goals at once?
17. Currently, what are the three most important areas in your life?
18. Tell me about your experience participating in this experiment.
19. What did it feel like to (Group 1: create your own tasks/motivators / Group 2: complete the scheduled daily tasks / Group 3: follow your own path/plan)?
20. How would you describe your attitude and approach toward the experiment?
21. What stood out to you the most during the experiment?
22. Did you complete any self-monitoring checklists? If so, what did you notice?
23. What do you think is required for someone to reach their goals?
24. In general, how would you rate your mental health (mood and/or stress level): excellent, very good, good, fair, poor or would you prefer not to say?
25. If you could go back and do something differently in the experiment, what would it be—and why?

Probing Questions
- In what way?
- Were there other...
- How did that happen?
- How did you do that?
- What happened then?
- What do you think about…?
- Was that what you expected?
- And how did you feel about that?
- What do you mean when you say…?
- Would you tell me more about that?
- What would you like to have happened?
- Was there anything you liked/disliked about it?
- I noticed that the Self-Monitoring Checklist didn't have space for emotions (sadness, etc.). Did you experience that during this goal-setting program?

Closing Information
- Thank you for all that valuable information, is there anything else you'd like to suggest or add before we end?
- Do you have any questions?
- Please email your completed Group documents as soon as possible. To maintain confidentiality, do not include your name on the document/s. Feel free to also remove any information you choose not to share.
- Before the experiment, you completed a self-efficacy assessment. Now that you have completed the experiment, I would like for you to complete that same assessment. I will be sending it to you via email.
- Once you've completed the 2nd assessment, I will provide the results of both assessments for your review. Self-efficacy improvements do not guarantee goal achievement—but it does increase the odds. It determines how you engage in activities and overcome adversity. It also impacts your behavior and emotional well-being.
- Along with the results of both assessments, I will attach a 1-page Overcoming Reference Tool to you. The tool will provide additional information on self-efficacy and goal setting.
- All participants will be entered into a $50 Visa/Mastercard gift card raffle. Approximately one week after experiment completion(Day 60), the drawing will take place. Raffle tickets will be marked by first and last name initials only and drawn by a third party. The winning participant will be contacted via email/social media/phone regarding their winning raffle. Non-winning raffle participants will not be contacted. Based on the winner preference, I will make plans to mail or deliver the $50 gift card in person.
- If you have questions at any time, please feel free to contact me via email at ████████████████████ or phone at ███████████

Appendix II

Self-Efficacy Assessment Comparison Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ███████████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Self-Efficacy Assessment Comparison Email

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you for completing the Self-Efficacy Post-Assessment!

Self-efficacy increases your emotional well-being by helping you perform what is necessary to get what you want. I conducted this study to explore how different goal-setting programs improve self-efficacy. You played a key role in accomplishing this goal by completing the Self-Efficacy Assessment before and after the experiment.

I have attached the results of both (pre & post) assessments for your review. I've also attached an Overcoming Reference Tool to provide additional guidance on improving self-efficacy and achieving future goals. If you have additional questions, please contact me via phone at ███████████ or email at ███████████████

Participants are a researcher's most value resource! To thank you for sharing your time, you will be included in a $50 Visa/Mastercard raffle drawing. It will take place after experiment completion (Day 60 or later). The winning participant will be contacted via email/social media/phone regarding their winning raffle. Non-winning raffle participants will not be contacted. Based on the winner preference, I will make plans to mail or deliver the gift card in person.

Please respond to this email, confirming that you received it successfully.

Thank you,

Tara N. Strickland

{attach Overcoming Reference Tool}

Appendix JJ

Overcoming Reference Tool

The bullets below provide a few helpful resources as it relates improving self-efficacy and achieving goals.

- Pick one virtue and set a goal to improve it.
- Stay in alignment with your personal values.
- Reward your successes but don't punish yourself for failure.
- Your attitude affects your stress level more than you may realize.
- Good time management is required to successfully accomplish a goal.
- To avoid being overwhelmed, limit the number of goals you set at once.
- When setting goals, make a to-do list of tasks you need to complete and prioritize them.
- Tell others about your goals to strengthen your commitment and demonstrate accountability.
- The most important time to focus on your goal is when you don't feel motivated, have anxiety, or experience resistance. It tells your brain that your feelings are normal and teaches perseverance.
- Keep finding ways to develop yourself. The more you develop, the broader your skillset and more success you tend to have.
- Studies show that well-being is dependent on good health, positive social relationships, and availability/access to basic resources (e.g., shelter, income, etc). For help with your mental health, please visit this website.
- Set positive goals only (e.g., instead of saying you will stop eating sweets, say you will start eating healthier).
- A good personal development plan considers the what, how, when and why of your desired goal.
- When experiencing goal roadblocks, remember to acknowledge your thoughts and feelings by writing them down. It helps to remove barriers.
- Don't just think about your goal—visualize it, write it down or create a vision board. Then, review it daily as a constant reminder.
- Stress-reducing techniques such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing aid in developing successful behaviors.
- When goal-setting, it is important to reflect on a regular basis. This allows you to track your progress, take a different direction if you've gone off course, identify things you need to devote more attention to and determine if you still want to achieve it.
- Personal development is more about building skills to reach your goals. If you would like to learn which skills you need to build, feel free to take this well-being quiz.
- By developing a growth mindset, you overcome the fear of making mistakes. This opens you up to new experiences and creates the life you desire.

- None of us will achieve anything if we don't keep trying when we fail. To develop your resilience, work on regulating your emotions, mindfulness, and positivity.
- There are five main aspects of personal health: physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual. It is crucial to improve every area for overall well-being.
- Focus on smaller goals (tasks) to build up to your bigger goal. This way, when you achieve the smaller ones, you are indirectly achieving the bigger one.
- When striving for more than one goal, organize them based on their level of significance or importance.
- When setting goals, be sure to make them specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time sensitive.
- Self-efficacy can be developed in four ways: by succeeding in a task, watching similar people succeed, seeking out role models/mentors and improving your mental and physical state. This exercise is an excellent self-efficacy improvement tool.

Appendix KK

Research Study Raffle Winner Notification Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: █████████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Research Study Raffle Winner Notification

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you for expressing interest in my research study: **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment**: *A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy*. Participants are a researcher's most value resource and I appreciate you offering to share your time.

Congratulations, you've won the $50 Visa/Mastercard Gift Card raffle!

Please contact me via phone at 3█████████ or email at ████████████████████ to discuss how you'd like your gift card delivered. I am open to delivering via mail or in-person.

Please respond to this email, confirming that you received it successfully.

Thanks again,

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix LL

Research Study Participant Thank You Email

TO: Selected Participant
FROM: ████████████████████
DATE: TBD
SUBJECT: Research Study Assessment Results/Thank You Email

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening {insert selected participant's name here}:

Thank you so much for participating in my research study: **The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment***: A Mixed Methods Study of Personal Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy*. Your willingness to contribute and share your experience made this research study possible.

If you have not emailed your completed Group 2 documents back to me, please do so ASAP. They provide me with additional research data. For confidentiality purposes, do not include your name on the document/s. Also, feel free to remove any additional information you chose not to share.

In this email, I've attached the results of your pre/post assessments. You may notice a 4-digit number within the filename of the results document; this is the number you were identified by throughout the research study.

I've also attached a 1-page Overcoming Reference Tool to this email. This tool provides additional goal-setting and self-efficacy information.

I sincerely hope you found this experience valuable. If you have additional feedback or questions, please contact me via phone at ███████████ or email at ████████████████████

Thank you for sharing your time.

Tara N. Strickland

Appendix MM

IRB Approval

IRB #: IRB-21-59
Title: The Self-Directed Goal Theory Experiment: A Mixed Methods Study of Personal
Development Goal-Setting Programs and Self-Efficacy
Creation Date: 11-8-2020
End Date:
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Tara Strickland
Review Board: SC Institutional Review Board
Sponsor:

Study History
Submission Type: Initial
Review Type: Expedited
Decision: Approved

Key Study Contacts
Member: Sherrie Wisdom
Role: Co-Principal Investigator
Contact: swisdom@lindenwood.edu

Member: Tara Strickland
Role: Principal Investigator
Contact: TNB388@lindenwood.edu

Member: Tara Strickland
Role: Primary Contact
Contact: TNB388@lindenwood.edu

Vita

Tara N. Strickland was born in Belleville, Illinois, on June 16, 1979. She attended Alta Sita Elementary School in East St. Louis, IL and graduated from Belleville Township High School East on June 4, 1997. In 2007, she registered as a Lindenwood University student; there, she received her Bachelor of Arts- Communications degree in 2011, and acquired her Master of Fine Arts- Writing and Master of Communications - Training and Development degrees directly after.

During her MFA stint, she served as an Editorial Assistant for Lindenwood University's quarterly journal, The Lindenwood Review; she also wrote several family law articles for Cordell Practice Management Group, penned personal interest articles for examiner.com, and published a memoir titled "The Scorned Butterfly." Her communications and adult education experience spans across several industries such as educational, legal, agrochemical/agricultural, and financial. Her roles have targeted a myriad of internal and external audiences across the United States and internationally. Her expertise encompasses creative/freelance/business writing/editing, online learning, corporate training, and strategic planning.