# IKIGAI

# Reflection on life goals optimizes human performance and happiness

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# Samenvatting

Het hebben en nastreven van een doel in het leven is één van de meest belangrijke menselijke behoeften. *Ikigai*, is een Japans woord voor "reden van bestaan", ook wel bekend als "de reden om 's morgens op te staan". In deze inaugurele rede zal ik de rol van zelfregulerend gedrag in het opbouwen van een zinvol bestaan bespreken. Deze gedragingen omvatten zowel het stellen van persoonlijke doelen als het maken van concrete plannen om deze doelen te bereiken, die beide aantoonbaar helpen om een richting of doel in het leven te vinden. Het vinden van een doel in het leven is vaak een moeizaam en langdurig proces en sommige mensen slagen er nooit in om hun "ikigai" te vinden. In deze rede bespreek ik een veelomvattende interventie die individuen kan helpen een doel in het leven te vinden en er tegelijkertijd voor zorgt dat mensen een concreet plan maken om hun doelen te verwezenlijken. Deze relatief korte interventie heeft aantoonbaar positieve en blijvende resultaten: niet alleen verhoogt deze het welzijn van studenten, tevens verhoogt deze het studiesucces met 20%, met name voor mannelijke studenten en studenten met een migratieachtergrond, en wordt de prestatiekloof verkleind. De uitstekende resultaten van deze interventie uit de positieve psychologie dragen bij aan de missie van de Rotterdam School of Management als voorvechter van positieve verandering in de wereld. Op basis van het succes tot nu toe, zijn er sterke argumenten voor invoering van de "goal-setting" interventie als vast onderdeel van het curriculum voor studenten. Dit zou de kwaliteit van de onderwijsprogramma's kunnen verbeteren en ertoe bij kunnen dragen het studieresultaat een flinke boost te geven. Voor bedrijven zou de interventie kunnen bijdragen om de carrière van werknemers te verbeteren en het bedrijfssucces te verhogen. In de inaugurele rede wordt het stellen van doelen in een breder verband besproken met voorbeelden uit onderwijs, het bedrijfsleven en operations management. De nadruk in deze rede ligt op het optimaliseren van prestaties en geluk door in je leven het heft in eigen handen te nemen.

# Abstract (English)

Having a purpose in life is one of the most fundamental human needs. Ikigai, a Japanese concept, means "a reason for being", sometimes referred to as a "reason to get up in the morning". In this inaugural address I will discuss the role played by self-regulatory behaviours in helping people to live a fulfilling life. These behaviours include personal goal setting and goal achievement plans, both of which have been shown to help people gain a direction or a sense of purpose in life. Finding a purpose in life often requires a lengthy search, and some people never manage to find their "ikigai". In this address, I discuss a comprehensive online goal-setting intervention, one which helps individuals to find a purpose in life while at the same time ensuring that they make a concrete plan to work towards the life goals they have set for themselves. This relatively brief intervention has been shown to have lasting results: not only does it increase the well-being of students it also boosts academic performance by over 20%, particularly for male and ethnic minority students, and reduces the performance gap. The excellent results from this positive psychology intervention contribute to the mission of the Rotterdam School of Management to be a force for positive change in the world. Given the success thus far, there are strong arguments for making this goal-setting intervention a formal part of the student curriculum. This would enhance the quality of the study programmes and help to boost the academic success of students and their institutions. If extended to companies, the intervention could also help to enhance the careers of individual employees and boost company performance. In the inaugural address, goal setting is shown in a broader perspective, with examples from education, business and operations management. The emphasis in this address is on taking control of one's life in order to optimize performance and happiness.

**The best day of your life is the one on which you decide your life is your own. No apologies or excuses. No one to lean on, rely on, or blame. The gift is yours – it is an amazing journey – and you alone are responsible for the quality of it. This is the day your life really begins.**

**Set exciting personal goals.**
**You will live longer.**
Bob Moawad

**To help others to develop and succeed in life is a reward itself and only has value when nothing is expected in return.**
General Choi Hong Hi, founder of Taekwon-Do

**The very purpose of our existence**
**is to seek happiness.**
The Dalai Lama

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# 1. Introduction

**Mijnheer de Rector Magnificus**
**Geachte College van Decanen,**
**Gewaardeerde collega's**
**Dames en heren,**

**Dear Rector Magnificus of Erasmus University,**
**Dear deans of Rotterdam School of Management,**
**Dear family, friends, and colleagues,**
**Dear students and other guests,**

Would you believe me if I told you that:
- Listening to your heartbeat helps you read other people's minds?
- Stress is bad for you, but only if you believe it to be bad?
- Stress can actually be good for you?
- A thirty-minute intervention can permanently change your beliefs about stress?
- Setting goals will increase your health, happiness, performance and longevity?

When I told my students about the research findings on stress, one of them reacted with "yeah, right. And if I jump out of the window, it will kill me, unless I believe it won't". Yes, something like that, indeed. I encouraged him to prove me wrong, but preferably some other way, as that would have been a very literal (and lethal) way of 'dropping out'.

When I started my study in Psychology at the Free University of Amsterdam, sometime in the last century, I had the idea that I was not too bright and I might not be able to make it through the exams. This did not deter me, but it did motivate me to work really hard. Because I had just bought a pile of books for the first trimester, I thought it would be better to start sooner rather than later. At the same time, I was already making a career in Taekwon-Do, a Korean martial art. As the lectures were during the day (usually at 9 in the morning) and the Taekwon-Do lessons in the evening, it made for a good combination. It did mean, however, that I did not have much time left for a social life. When studying for my degree, and when doing my PhD later on, I lived in the Nieuwmarkt in Amsterdam, a lively neighbourhood and good area for nightlife.
When I cycled home from the lectures, especially in the summer, I noticed there were many people sitting outside on the terraces. I usually rushed past them on my way home, meanwhile wondering how they could find the time to do this. I had to rush home, grab a bite to eat, get a quick rest, and then pack my sports bag and head off to the training session. So it meant that I had to make choices all the time, and when I was asked to join friends for a drink, I usually had to say "no".

In one of our courses, we learned about the famous "marshmallow experiment", one of a series of experiments on delayed gratification. In the experiment, a child was offered a marshmallow or some other sweet and was promised another one if he or she

managed *not* to eat it while the experimenter was out of the room, typically about 10–15 minutes. Follow-up studies ten years later showed that kids who were able to withstand temptation and waited longer tended to have better life outcomes, such as better academic achievement and a better body mass index (Mischel, 1974; Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1989), and they also had better cognitive control and showed less impulsive behaviour (Eigsti et al., 2006). It turned out that postponing immediate gratification is an essential feature of self-regulation (Mischel et al., 1989).



**Figure 1.** The marshmallow experiment (Mischel, 1974)

At that time I never made the connection – personally I do not like marshmallows – but looking back it could be that I was doing just that: setting goals and striving for them, in the meantime delaying gratification. This seemed to come quite naturally to me, but for most people it certainly does not. Why do people differ so much in this regard, and why is it so hard for most of us to delay gratification? First of all, most people are unsure of their goals, and thus immediate gratification and doing fun things become all the more compelling. But even if people have goals they are striving for (a business career, success at sports), doing fun things that do not contribute to these goals, and may even distract from reaching these goals, can seem more alluring than those more distant goals. People also have a problem weighing up more distant rewards, namely those that are further ahead in time. This is called temporal discounting, which is described in construal level theory, and the basic idea is that temporal distance changes how people respond to future events (for a review see Trope & Liberman, 2003). The rewards that come from achieving an important goal are often in the future, so smaller but more immediately achievable rewards may seem more tempting. This influences the evaluation and choices that people make (Mischel, Cantor, & Feldman, 1996; Trope & Liberman, 2003). The research that followed on from the marshmallow experiment focused on various ways of increasing self-control, including physical exercise, money management training, and formulating goals in concrete rather than abstract terms.

**Self-regulation and self-control**

A recent study has shown that physical exercise can increase self-control (Oaten & Cheng, 2006). During the four months of the study, people who performed exercise routines were found to be more successful than control subjects at reducing their smoking, alcohol use and caffeine consumption. In addition, they ate more healthy food, spent more time studying, and watched less television. They also reported lower levels of stress and emotional distress (for a review see Baumeister, Gailliot, DeWall, & Oaten, 2006; Oaten & Cheng, 2006). Similar effects have been reported from a study on self-control in which students were given training in how to manage their finances (i.e., they were trained in how to save money; (Oaten & Cheng, 2007). Interestingly, another study showed that students who reported feeling a lot of exam stress showed less self-control and were more likely than their less stressed counterparts to report some form of breakdown in regulatory behaviour, such as eating junk food, smoking cigarettes, or exercising less (Oaten & Cheng, 2005).

As I have said, I did not then make the connection to my own behaviour. However, whereas I seemed to have found a way to withstand temptation in terms of immediate gratification and stay on track to meet my goals (among others becoming a world champion in Taekwon-Do and becoming a professor in my area of expertise), I noticed other students struggled and did not stay on track. My fellow students said that they found it OK not to study too much and they did not seem to have goals to strive for. Luckily, research has shown that self-control and self-regulation can be acquired through training, as I have described above. But what if people were to get so enthusiastic about a goal that they started this "training" automatically? Below I will describe the role of a purpose in life (i.e., ikigai) and the meaning that people can give to their life, and how this affects self-regulation, performance and happiness.

# 2.  Ikigai and the meaning of life

The meaning of life is a topic that has been discussed by the ancient Greeks, including Aristotle and Aristippus, as well as by psychologists and psychiatrists such as Maslow, Jung and Freud. The topic is still very relevant today, and the answers we give to this existential question shape our goals, priorities and decisions (Huta, 2015). To most people, drifting aimlessly through life is not very attractive and we often admire people who go out of their way to make their dreams (i.e., goals) come true. In Japan, ikigai – "a reason for being", also known as a "reason to get up in the morning" – is a very important concept and people are expected to find their purpose in life. They also report searching for meaning (Steger, Kawabata, Shimai, & Otake, 2008), although general well-being is often higher in individualistic cultures (for a review see Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; cf. Veenhoven, Ehrhardt, Ho, & de Vries, 1993).

Dan Buettner, a science journalist who has been on a quest to identify the "longevity hotspots" in the world, has collaborated with experts to find out what causes longevity and discover the secrets of a long life (Buettner, 2010b). In a 2009 TED talk which has now been viewed over three million times, Dan suggested that ikigai was one of the reasons why people in those longevity hotspots had such long lives (How to live to be 100+; Buettner, 2009, 2010a). Indeed, a study of 43,391 Japanese adults found that, over a seven-year follow-up period, mortality was lower among those subjects who indicated that they had found a sense of ikigai (Sone et al., 2008).

Having a purpose in life has been shown to increase health and longevity across cultures, sexes and age groups (Boyle, Barnes, Buchman, & Bennett, 2009; Sone et al., 2008), even when things such as positive relationships with others and general affect were controlled for in the analyses (Hill & Turiano, 2014). People can derive a purpose in life from many different activities, and it has been found that these activities can range from volunteering, to giving social support to the elderly and even taking care of pets, all of which have been shown to be related to an increase in happiness, better health outcomes and greater longevity (for a review see McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). The meaning of life used to be an elusive concept for scientists, but in the last couple of years much progress has been made in this area.

As we currently have much more know-how in terms of how to increase people's longevity through medical means, it seems that people will carry on living longer and longer lives (it has been estimated that by 2030 female life expectancy will break the 90-year barrier) (Kontis et al., 2017; Oeppen & Vaupel, 2002). Luckily, not only has medical knowledge of longevity increased, but so too has our understanding of the associated psychological factors, and we now have more knowledge of how people can live these longer lives in a way that feels more meaningful to them. In a *New Scientist* feature article in January 2017 (Burelle, 2017), entitled "A meaning to life: How a sense of purpose can keep you healthy", it was stated that:

**"The notion of purpose in life may seem ill-defined and even unscientific. But a growing heap of research is pinning down what it is, and how it affects our lives. People with a greater sense of purpose live longer, sleep better and have better sex. Purpose cuts the risk of stroke and depression. It helps people recover from addiction or manage their glucose levels if they are diabetic. If a pharmaceutical company could bottle such a treatment, it would make billions. But you can find your own, and it's free."**

In 2012, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon commissioned the first World Happiness Report, ranking countries according to people's level of happiness. In the 2017 happiness report, "eudaimonia", a sense of meaning or purpose in life, is measured together with life evaluation and affect, and one of the conclusions reached is that: "There has also been some evidence that addressing inequalities of income and education would not only narrow health inequalities, but also raise average levels at the same time. This literature suggests that at least some of the total influence of income, and perhaps a larger part of the influence of education, on well-being flows through its influence on healthy life expectancy."

In its 2016 Sustainable Development Goals Report, the United Nations made it an important goal to ensure sustainable social and economic progress worldwide. At Rotterdam School of Management we have picked up on this and our new mission of *being a force for positive change in the world* is aligned to the United Nations goals, such as "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages", and "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education". These developments coincide with exciting developments in the area of social psychology. Specifically, these policy goals coincide with a movement that is taking place within psychology, where a shift is taking place, and people are now focusing less on psychopathology and human dysfunctioning and becoming more interested in human growth and health and positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychology, or the scientific study of human flourishing that aims to optimize human functioning within communities and organizations, has become very influential both within and outside the scientific community (Srinivasan, 2015). The heightened interest in these topics may have something to do with the relatively long period of peace and prosperity experienced in large parts of the Western world (Ryan, 2001), and may thus represent the self-actualisation part of Maslow's pyramid of needs (Maslow, 2013). Recently, calls have been made for positive psychology to be made part of the educational curriculum in order to teach people "life-skills" and to combat the rising number of mental health problems such as depression (e.g., Clonan, Chafouleas, McDougal, & Riley-Tillman, 2004; Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009).

After decades of testing, and starting with the work of Kurt Lewin (e.g., Lewin, 1938), we now have a much better sense of what works and what doesn't in terms of psychological interventions aimed at changing behaviour and improving people's lives. In general, these work by changing people's outlook on life: by giving them a sense of purpose. This can be achieved even in small ways, such as getting teenagers to do community work in order to help prevent teenage pregnancies. The underlying principle here is to help people feel they are needed and this gives them a goal in life that makes

them feel needed (Wilson, 2011). This works better than the economic approach of using carrots and sticks, which has been shown to be ineffective in general and may even have many unintended and unwanted side effects (Amabile, 1998; Kerr, 1975; Marciano, 2010). Getting people to set their own goals may not only be more effective in terms of them actually achieving those goals, but may also help them feel happier and more engaged. The story editing approach described by Wilson (2011) is a technique in which people can rewrite their life-story through narrative writing, and can be very effective in helping them to 'get their story straight' and free up energy to pursue their goals effectively (cf. Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Schippers, Scheepers, & Peterson, 2015). Historically, this developed from research on narrative writing. This form of therapy, developed by Pennebaker in the 1980s (Pennebaker, 1990; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986), uses the act of writing down one's feelings to ease emotional feelings resulting from psycho trauma. Subsequent research by King noted that future-oriented writing about the "best possible self" was just as effective as writing about a traumatic event, but did not have the short-term negative consequences of negative mood and heightened stress (King, 2001). Interestingly, when people were asked to write about a trauma and then about the positive effects of that trauma, this approach was not successful (King & Miner, 2000). From King's studies, it can be concluded that writing about life goals had the effect of making people less susceptible to illness five months on from that exercise. In the long run, this can also increase longevity, although the follow-up was not long enough to establish this.

Although maintaining a sense of purpose in life has been linked to social integration, better health and psychological well-being, in the West, older people often score lower on purpose in life (for a meta-analysis see Pinquart, 2002; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Schippers et al., 2015). In Figure 2 we can see that while most aspects of psychological well-being are relatively stable over a person's life span, the dimensions of personal growth seems to drop as we get older, while purpose in life drops off sharply with age (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). In the East, it seems that people have less difficulty maintaining a purpose in life as they age, as there is often no fixed age at which to retire and even the word retirement does not exist. This may account (in part) for their greater longevity (Buettner, 2010b). Despite the earlier difficulties in determining precisely what is meant by the meaning of life or happiness, social scientists have now gathered a critical mass of data that enables us to draw firmer conclusions regarding the building blocks of a productive, happy and fulfilling life (Buettner, 2010b; Pinquart, 2002; Schippers & Hogenes, 2011). Having a goal in life has also been shown to be related to resilience and can help people to survive hardship (for a review see McKnight & Kashdan, 2009; cf. Nygren et al., 2005). For instance, Viktor Frankl, an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist who had survived the holocaust, used his experience to formulate a theory on the meaning of life, and concluded that life can have meaning even in the most impoverished circumstances (Frankl, 1985, 2014). Interestingly, this also means that happiness, or even good conditions in the short term, are not absolute requirements for having a life goal. It seems to be the other way around: having a goal in life can help people to survive in very impoverished and harsh conditions and may ensure that they lead a relatively happy and productive life.
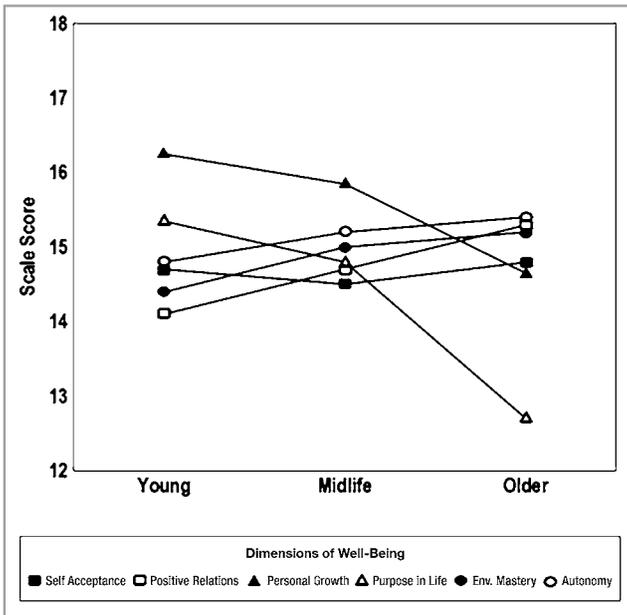
**Figure 2.** Psychological well-being across the lifespan

From: Ryff and Keyes (1995)

According to Emmons (1999; p. 3), "goals provide a sense of meaning and purpose in life", and having a sense of purpose may in turn be related to organized goal structures and goal pursuit, and provide centrality in a person's identity (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). In different stages of their life, people will have different life goals, or may need to revise those life goals (cf. Steger, Beeby, Garrett, & Kashdan, 2013). In earlier life-stages, people are often still searching for a sense of purpose or meaning in life, but later in life the search for meaning is related to lower levels of well-being (Steger, Oishi, & Kashdan, 2009). One group of researchers working in this area summed it up as follows: "People searching for meaning feel little control over their environment and feel dissatisfied with themselves and their relationships" (Steger et al., 2009; p. 208). According to McKnight and Kashdan (2009), purpose consists of three dimensions: (a) *scope*, or how central the purpose is to a persons' life, (b) *strength*, or the extent to which the purpose influences relevant behaviours, and (c) *awareness*, or the extent to which a person is aware of the purpose and/or can articulate it. In addition to these dimensions, we now know more about the kinds of purpose that are best in terms of optimizing happiness and performance.

# 3. Kind of purpose

So what kind of purpose is best for optimizing performance and happiness? A key discussion in the literature is whether having a self-serving purpose (hedonistic; focused on pleasure attainment and pain avoidance) or one that is oriented towards helping others (eudaimonic; i.e. focused on meaning and self-realization) is more beneficial for happiness (Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002; Ryan, 2001). Recent studies suggest that hedonistic and eudaimonic well-being represent two kinds of happiness (Kashdan, Biswas-Diener, & King, 2008). A differentiation is made between subjective well-being (SWB), or the "evaluation of life in terms of satisfaction and balance between positive and negative affect", and psychological well-being (PWB), which "entails perception of engagement with existential challenges of life" (Keyes et al., 2002, p. 1007). While both are important, recent research has indeed confirmed that both are related to well-being (Henderson, Knight, & Richardson, 2013), although it is also conceivable that a purely hedonic lifestyle may be unrelated to psychological well-being in the long run (cf. Anić, 2013; Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013).

Thus, having an altruistic purpose in life may be particularly helpful in terms of optimizing happiness. Studies on "random acts of kindness" – selfless acts to help or cheer up other people – have shown that these acts strengthen at least well-being of the person performing that act (Nelson, Layous, Cole, & Lyubomirsky, 2016; Otake, Shimai, Tanaka-Matsumi, Otsui, & Fredrickson, 2006), and that, in general, helping others is better for the well-being of the benefactor than providing treats for oneself (Nelson et al., 2016). Indeed, diary studies reveal that people derive greater psychological well-being from eudaimonic behaviour, and that engaging in inherently meaningful activities each day is more strongly related to a stronger sense of well-being than hedonistic behaviours (Steger, Kashdan, & Oishi, 2008). Indeed, research has shown that pursuing happiness in socially engaged ways is related to higher well-being (Ford et al., 2015). But even setting goals such as a healthier lifestyle may start a virtuous recursive cycle, where you perform better and feel happier, especially if that lifestyle involves physical exercise (cf. Schippers & Hogenes, 2011).

The goal-setting intervention that I will elaborate on in this inaugural address is an intervention that can set people (or help them to set themselves) on to the "right" track. Basically, it makes sure that people make their distant life goals very salient and describe them in concrete rather than abstract terms, and this has been shown to offset the negative effects of temporal discounting (Trope & Liberman, 2003). It is one of psychology's most powerful interventions and shows that even a short and seemingly simple intervention can have profound effects (Wilson, 2011). In his book "Redirect: The surprising new science of psychological change", Wilson (2011) describes how "story editing" is a way of redirecting your life by writing about it. In this way, he offers an explanation of what happens in such interventions: by rewriting your life-story, you can break free from self-defeating cycles of thinking and create a more optimistic story that will energize you to take action (Wilson, 2011).

In conclusion, it seems that interventions aimed at finding a purpose in life can be very effective for people across all age groups and backgrounds, and are in general more effective than using more coercive measures to try and stop people going off on the wrong track (cf. Wilson, 2011). However, it seems that, to date, many ineffective interventions keep being used as they seem to have high face validity (i.e., they appear effective, while systematic evaluations may show that they are not).

# 4.	Ineffective interventions

Often policymakers and educators use ineffective interventions. One example described by Wilson (2011) is "Scared Straight", a well-known and widely used programme aimed at reducing crime and ensuring that at-risk teenagers are deterred from offending. This programme, that keeps being used, even in TV shows, is used by the US government, and includes organized visits to prisons, the idea being that these visits will deter teenagers from offending once they have observed prison life and interacted with inmates. However, several studies and a meta-analysis have concluded that, instead of the intervention having a positive effect and reducing crime, participants are actually *more* likely to offend (for a meta-analysis see Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, & Buehler, 2002), and Wilson describes several of those. In terms of (crime) prevention, a programme called the "nurse family partnership" is especially worth mentioning. Here, nurses visit young mothers at risk of crime for a two-year period after the birth of their child (Drake, Aos, & Miller, 2009). This programme has been shown to be very effective in terms of not only reducing the mothers' future criminality, but also significantly reducing the chances that the children themselves will commit offences. The only problem is that these interventions require one-on-one coaching or therapy, making them very labour-intensive (although in most cases cost-effective; Drake et al., 2009). It may make sense to see whether "cheaper", more scalable, interventions can be used in order to ensure that millions of people can profit from those interventions. Educational institutions may be a particularly good starting point from which to fight aimlessness, and prevent students from drifting through life in an aimless way, having no particular sense of purpose by letting students formulate a purpose in life (Schippers et al., 2015).

Unfortunately, it seems that programmes such as Scared Straight keep being used, even though it has become clear that they are ineffective – the first studies showing this came out several decades ago. In 1982 a randomized-control study by Finckenauer showed that Scared Straight participants were more likely to offend and be arrested (Finckenauer, 1982), and he then comments on the "panacea phenomenon", or the belief that there are easy fixes for complex social problems. On the other hand, Wilson's book (2011) shows there are "easy fixes", but these need to be sought in the area of self-actualisation. However, as seen with the nurse family partnership, even effective programmes often require intensive coaching and/or careful implementation, making them quite costly (Schippers et al., 2015). Other interventions, such as the goal-setting intervention described below, are more cost-effective and scalable (Schippers et al., 2015).

# 5. Effective interventions to enhance performance and increase happiness

How can we arrive at a purpose in life that is about enhancing the well-being of others? Research shows that simply reporting that one is searching for meaning is unrelated to finding meaning (Steger, Kashdan, Sullivan, & Lorentz, 2008), suggesting that interventions are needed to bring this about. It has been shown that even simply meditating can help to clear the mind and to start the process of setting life goals (Steger & Ekman, 2016). This can start small, realizing the things one would like to do differently and trying to make one's work more meaningful, as well as investing in social relationships (Steger & Ekman, 2016). One thing which might help in this respect would be having a more stable feeling of self-esteem (cf. Kashdan, 2006). A classic piece of advice here is to think about what you would like to be said on your memorial, or whom you would like to emulate. As the preferred style of arriving at life goals may be different for every person, and carving out time to do this is something that most people will not be able to do readily, a more effective approach seems to be to use a more formalized, evidence-based, intervention. The kind of goals set (i.e., self-focused versus other-focused) does matter, with other-directed goals being related to more positive emotions and in turn having a more positive impact on happiness (Nelson et al., 2016).

Research has shown that interventions aimed at assisting individuals to set and elaborate on life goals have proved particularly successful (Morisano, Hirsh, Peterson, Pihl, & Shore, 2010; Travers, Morisano, & Locke, 2014). Goal-setting theory, developed in the mid-1960s by Edwin Locke, provides one of the most influential and practical accounts of motivation in managerial and academic contexts (for a review see Locke & Latham, 2006). Numerous articles have supported the theory's main claims, and it has become a major component of the self-development and management literature (e.g., Locke, 2000; Locke, Cartledge, & Knerr, 1970; Locke & Latham, 2002; Locke & Latham, 2006). Studies by Locke and colleagues have shown that specific and ambitious goals lead to greater performance improvement than goals that are easy or general ("do your best"). There seems to be a linear relationship between goal difficulty and task performance, provided that the person accepts the goal (where that goal is imposed by others, rather than self-defined), has the ability to attain it, and does not have conflicting goals (Locke & Latham, 2006). Importantly, goal setting can be seen as a way of optimizing task and academic performance, and can also be cost-saving (Schmidt, 2013).

Conscious reflection on experience, and description and prioritization of goals, can enhance motivation, experienced as energy, drive and reduced anxiety (Alarcon & Edwards, 2013), and is positively related to academic and task performance (e.g., Hirsh, Mar, & Peterson, 2013; Morisano, 2013; Morisano et al., 2010; Travers, 2013; Travers et al., 2014; Wilson, 2011).

Many authors contend that goal setting enhances self-regulation – or the "self-generated thoughts, feelings and actions that are planned and cyclically related to the attainment of personal goals" (Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2005; p. 14) – and agree that this is the mechanism by which goals are related to action (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Latham & Locke, 1991; Oettingen, Hönig, & Gollwitzer, 2000).

Sin and Lyubomirsky (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of positive psychology interventions (PPIs), defined as "treatment methods or intentional activities that aim to cultivate positive feelings, behaviours, or cognitions" (p. 468), and found that using a series of PPIs over a longer period of time seemed to be more effective in alleviating depression than using stand-alone PPIs over a shorter period and/or in groups. The interventions in this study ranged from random acts of kindness and formulating a purpose in life to positive writing and letters of gratitude (i.e., letters that convey a very deep-felt sense of gratitude, never previously expressed, relating to some past action). Indeed, the goal-setting intervention I describe in this address is indeed a package intervention, and involves several elements from story editing, goal setting and goal monitoring. Reflection, which is a key part of the intervention, is described in the next section.

# 6.  Reflection and goal-setting theory

The roots of behaviour and performance management can be traced back to the ancient Greeks. For instance, the concept of reflexivity – an evaluative process of discussion that targets goals, processes or outcomes – stems from philosophy and is often seen as consciousness, awareness and self-knowledge. Greek philosophers like Socrates and Epicurus referred to reflexivity as thinking about the self and the world in a dialectical manner. It was important to know one's own desires and the implications of those desires. Being conscious of those could bring to light differences between one's current state and one's desired state, which could be addressed by setting goals. The empirical study of goal setting started with Mace in the 1930s; his studies discredited the then widely held notion that employees are motivated mainly by money, and stated that most people have a "will to work" that can be released under the right circumstances (Carson, Carson, & Heady, 1994). As managers cannot constantly drive motivation or monitor work performance, goal setting can be seen as an important self-regulatory mechanism that helps individuals, teams and organizations to prioritize tasks and is a key driver of business performance. Indeed, the clear and careful articulation of goals appears to be important for enhancing performance in multiple arenas and levels. Work summarized and reviewed by Locke and Latham (Locke & Latham, 1990; Locke & Latham, 2002; Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham, 1981; see also Smith, Locke, & Barry, 1990) indicates that well-defined goals affect individual, team and firm performance through four mechanisms: (1) directing attention and effort toward goal-relevant activities and away from those that are goal-irrelevant; (2) increasing energy and motivation, with ambitious goals leading to greater effort;(3) increasing persistence, with demanding goals serving to prolong effort; and (4) leading to a search for and use of task-relevant knowledge and strategies.

To conclude, goal setting can optimize performance in many areas of work, including academia. The economic value of optimizing individual, team and organizational performance can be huge. One field in which the economic value of optimizing in general has long been realized is supply chain management. Interestingly, early goal-setting research discussed how assigning a "hard" goal improved the performance of logging trucks, raising the net weight of truck loads from 60% to 90%, saving the company a lot of money (Latham & Baldes, 1975). From this early research which often focused on company goals, and/or goals assigned by others, current research has evolved to focus on personal (i.e., life) goals (Schippers et al., 2015), and team goal setting. Team goal setting has been shown to improve team functioning (for a meta-analysis see Kleingeld, van Mierlo, & Arends, 2012).

I aim to expand this line of research by investigating how people at different levels in the organization set goals (individual, team and organizational), how these goals can be aligned, and whether reflecting on one's own goals in relation to company goals helps in aligning those goals. I expect that this will enhance individual, team and firm performance. Also, we aim to see how the goals students set themselves during their studies will determine not only their academic success, but also affect the choices they

make before they move on to their career, whatever sphere they enter. Furthermore, I aim to investigate the underlying mechanisms that make goal setting effective, by undertaking content analysis of the text written by participants and performing diary studies. Below, I will first discuss various ways in which goal setting and writing about life goals may have an effect. After that, I will elaborate on the results so far.

# 7.    Mediating mechanisms

One of the central challenges for employees nowadays is choosing between the many opportunities they are presented with, setting their own goals, and aligning them with the goals of the organization. This is important both in business and in education. So far, my research suggests that the kind of goals that people formulate is less important than how specific their plans are, the number of contingency plans they formulate, and the amount of goal-monitoring they intend to do (Schippers, Scheepers, Morisano, Locke, & Peterson, 2017; Schippers, Scheepers, et al., 2014).

Importantly, in the process of reflecting on and formulating life goals, sometimes also achieved via writing about the "best possible self", one is less constrained by the past or present representation of the self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). What most researchers are interested in understanding, however, is the mechanism by which the positive effects of goal setting occur. According some authors, the main mediating mechanism seems to be self-regulatory behaviours, such as a greater level of academic initiative, evident in active participation in class discussions or discussions with the teacher outside of class, fewer absences from school, and less misbehaviour in class (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006). This in turn has been linked to lower levels of depression and higher GPA, and follow-up studies showed these effects to persist for the next two years (Oyserman et al., 2006). Others (e.g., Layous, 2013) have suggested that another mediating mechanism is *flow* – a mental state of being fully immersed in an activity, with a sense of energy, involvement and enjoyment – that results from being engaged in goal-related activities that are optimal in terms of challenging one's skill level (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow, also described as an "optimal experience", can in principle be achieved by performing any activity, but is most likely to be achieved when one is performing a goal-related activity that is intrinsically rewarding and has a good balance between skill and challenge (Csikszentmihályi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 2005; for a meta-analysis see Fong, Zaleski, & Leach, 2015). Another concept very similar to flow, and shown to be related to academic performance (Bakker, Sanz Vergel, & Kuntze, 2015; Schaufeli, Martinez, Marque ́s-Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002), is engagement. This has been described as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption" (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002, p. 74). Engagement has also been shown to be related to observed learning activities, and in turn to course grade (Bakker et al., 2015). Another mediating mechanism that has been suggested is resilience (cf. Clonan et al., 2004; Shapiro, 2000). Resilience, or the capacity to bounce back from adversity, has been shown to be important in persistence in meeting (academic) goals (Martin & Marsh, 2006). Thus, I suggest that reflecting on and setting life goals is related to self-regulatory behaviours and resilience, and in turn to flow and engagement. Engagement and flow are ultimately related to academic outcomes and well-being. These relationships are depicted in Figure 3.
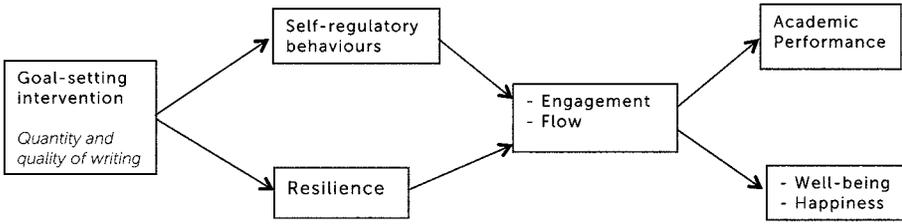
**Figure 3.** Mediating mechanisms between goal setting and outcomes.

# 8.    The goal-setting intervention at RSM

It has been suggested that educational institutions in particular may benefit from using positive psychology interventions, since students can profit from these interventions if they are made part of the curriculum (Clonan et al., 2004). These may be especially useful when people are embarking on a new path in their life, as in the transition from school to university (Schippers et al., 2015; Wilson, 2011). Since a huge challenge for our School was the large number of drop-outs in the first year, I developed a goal-setting programme to combat this problem, the main idea being that reflection on goals might help in improving student retention and performance. In the academic year 2011/2012 I implemented a narrative evidence-based online goal-setting programme for all first-year BA students as part of the Management Skills course. This was combined with an "I WILL" statement and photo for all first-year students. The students are expected to participate in this intervention about three weeks after the start of the academic year. The intervention is based on prior literature in this area, and is basically a "package" intervention, with many elements involving goal setting and writing (Schippers et al., 2015). The intervention is completed by all first-year students (around 800 each year) and consists of three stages. Students are instructed to find a place where they will not be disturbed for the duration of their writing (about two hours for Stage 1 and another two hours for Stage 2). They are also told to leave at least one night between Stages 1 and 2. The intervention requires them to explicitly conceptualize, articulate, plan, and summarize their desired futures (for a detailed description, see Schippers et al., 2015, supplementary information). Stages 1 and 2 take place in two sessions on consecutive days, each lasting between two and three hours, and Stage 3 consists of a ten-minute photoshoot on a third day. In Stage 1, students write down, in their own words, what they want for their future, and what they do not want. In Stage 2, they articulate, strategize, and justify in detail the goals produced in Stage 1. They can formulate up to eight goals, but must come up with a minimum of six. In Stage 3 (the "I WILL" programme), the students all have their portrait taken by the university photographer and are asked to provide an overall personal goal statement (e.g., "I will work as hard as possible to achieve my goals;" "I will sustain our world for future generations"). The photos and statements are then published together on the University's website and on a Facebook page. The I WILL statement constitutes a form of public commitment to the goals (cf. Hollenbeck, Williams, & Klein, 1989; Schienker, Dlugolecki, & Doherty, 1994).

In studying the effect of the intervention, we used a time-lagged quasi-experimental design, comparing two cohorts of students with two pre-intervention cohorts (total $n$ = 2,928). The intervention cohorts showed an increase of 22% in academic performance, compared to pre-intervention cohorts. The level of success in terms of academic achievement depended on three types of student involvement. First, the degree of formal participation in the goal-setting intervention – namely how many stages of the intervention the students completed; those who completed more stages also received more credits (ECTS) at the end of the academic year, and this relationship seemed to be fairly linear (see Figure 4). Second, the amount of writing, as assessed by the number of words written related to the number of credits. Third, the quantity and

quality of the plans they had formulated for how they would meet the goals they had set themselves. Interestingly, we found that it did not seem to matter whether students wrote about academic goals, non-academic goals, or a combination of the two. Rather, it appeared to be the overall process of writing about their personal goals, and how many of the three intervention stages they actually completed, as well as the effort they put into doing this that determined their level of success (Schippers, Locke, Morisano, Scheepers & Peterson, 2017).

Within RSM, this goal-setting trajectory has been very successful. The goal-setting/I WILL trajectory has proved to be effective for our School and has also improved its financial position. Specifically, the intervention has had three main benefits for RSM. First, it has raised the overall performance of the intervention cohorts from 2011 onwards by more than 20%, specifically, the intervention cohorts showed a 21% higher level of academic performance in terms of ECTS and the retention rate increased by 22%, compared to the two pre-intervention cohorts. Second, it has boosted academic achievement and increased retention rates, particularly for ethnic minority and male students. Third, the increase in retention rate resulting from the intervention has brought in additional income for the School, because more students now finish the bachelor programme and progress to the master. The amount of extra income has been estimated to be €2 million per cohort.
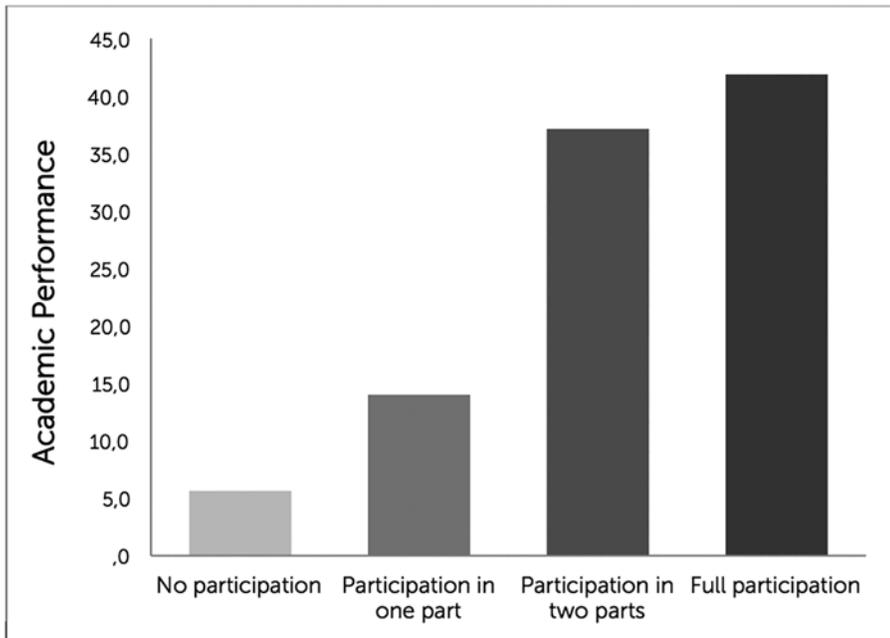


**Figure 4.** Academic performance (# of ECTS) after year 1 in relation to Participation in the intervention for Intervention Cohort 1
From: Schippers et al. (2017)

**Closing the gender and ethnicity gap**

Since the gender and ethnicity gap in academic achievement constitutes one of today's key social problems, we also assessed not only whether the intervention was boosting academic performance but also whether it was helping to reduce the gender and ethnicity gap.

Prior research has indicated that females in general show more self-control and a greater capacity for academic delay of gratification (i.e., the "postponement of immediately available opportunities to satisfy impulses or goals that are temporally remote but ostensibly more valuable" (Bembenutty & Karabenick, 2004; p. 39), and this has been proposed as an explanation of the gender gap (Duckworth et al., 2015). One explanation of the ethnicity gap could be that ethnic minority students have a lower level of academic self-efficacy than other students (Bembenutty, 2007). As both delayed gratification and self-efficacy are enhanced by the goal-setting intervention, we expected that the intervention would have a greater effect on male students and those from ethnic minorities. In our study, we assessed the effects of the goal setting for one full cohort of first-year university students *(N = 703)*. The academic performance of these students was compared with that of three pre-intervention control cohorts *(N = 896, 825 and 720)*, with particular attention being paid to the role of gender and ethnicity. As we outlined in an earlier publication, there were notable benefits in terms of performance:

**"The intervention boosted academic achievement and increased retention rates, particularly for ethnic minority and male students, who had underperformed in previous years. The gap in performance between men and women, and between ethnic minorities and nationals, became considerably smaller within the intervention cohort. After year 1, the gender gap closed by 98%, and the ethnicity gap by 38% (rising to 93% after the second year). All groups in the intervention cohort performed significantly better than the control cohorts, but the effect was particularly large for males and ethnic minorities. The increase in performance was largest for ethnic minority males; they earned 44 % more credits, and their retention rate increased by 54%. Overall, the results indicate that a comprehensive goal-setting intervention implemented early in students' academic careers can significantly and substantially reduce gender and ethnic minority inequalities in achievement"**
(Schippers et al., 2015; p. 1).

The results for number of credits (ECTS) are shown in Figures 5a, 5b and 5c.

5a
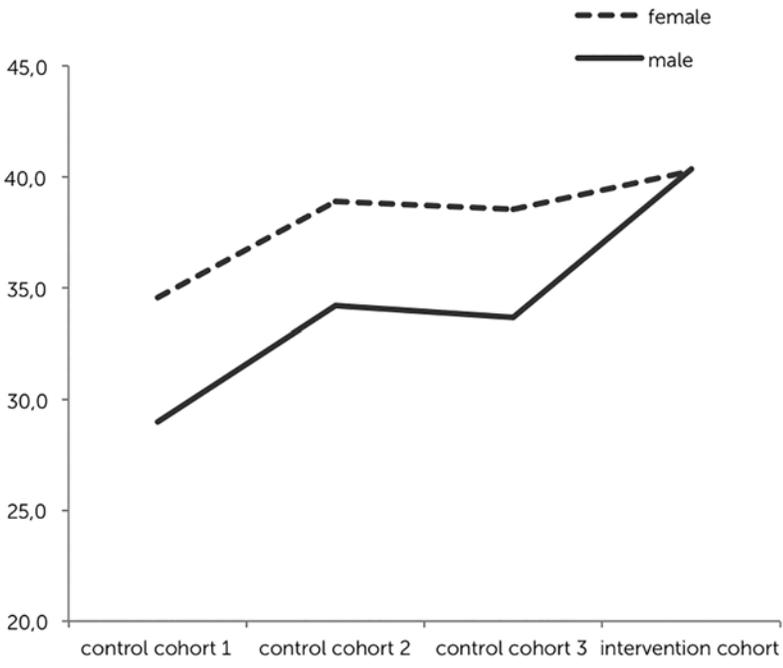


5b
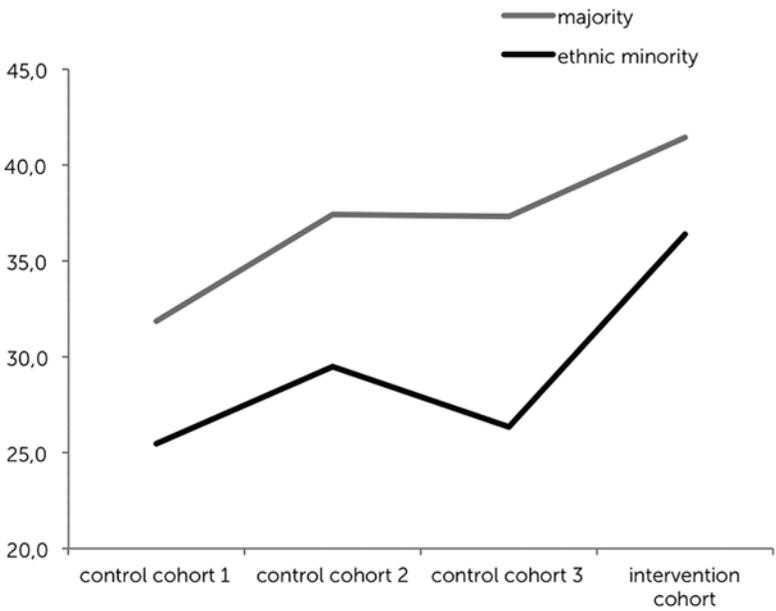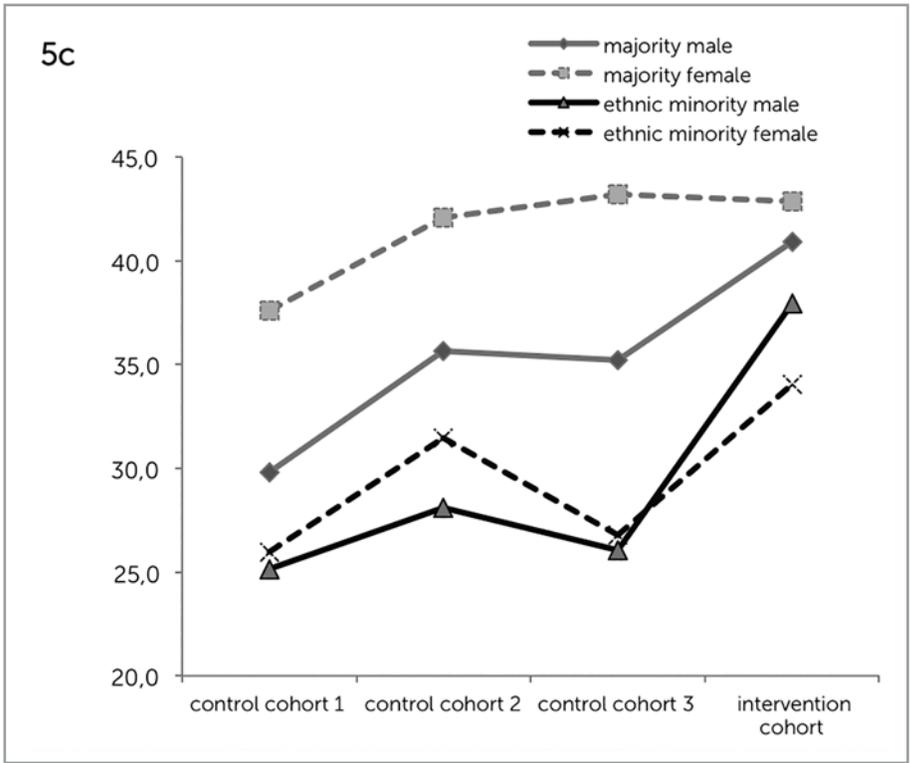
**Figure 5** Number of credits (ECTS) earned after the first academic year by gender, ethnicity and cohort

5a   While the three pre-intervention control cohorts show a consistent gender gap, this gap closes almost completely in the intervention cohort, even though all students in the intervention cohort participated.

5b   While the ethnicity gap seems to widen rather than close in the pre-intervention control cohorts, in the intervention cohort the gap closes significantly.

5c   The interaction between gender and ethnicity shows that while both gaps diminish in the intervention cohort, the most significant improvement in performance is achieved by male ethnic minority students'.

From: Schippers et al. (2015)

The study showed that the performance enhancement resulting from the online goal-setting intervention was helpful for most students, but especially for subgroups of students, closing substantive performance gaps, apparently regardless of the origin of the gaps (Schippers et al., 2015). The intervention cohort showed substantial increases in academic performance, ranging from 5% to 44% in terms of the number of credits for various subgroups after year 1. As stated, the positive effects continued to the second year for ethnic minority students (Schippers et al., 2015). These results are encouraging, and the fact that we use this intervention just after students have entered the University may have added to its success.

# 9.    Timing and scaling of interventions

For those whose student days are long behind them, the good news is that it is in principle never too late to find a purpose in life, although recent research suggests that it may be most beneficial to find a direction in life as early as possible (cf. Hill & Turiano, 2014). It seems that interventions of the kind we used may be particularly helpful in a new phase of life, such as when starting one's study, or just before entering the job market. According to Wilson, in an interview with the *Deseret News*, "The first year of college is a 'narrative fork in the road'," (Schulzke, 2016), and in terms of our intervention, this may have added to its usefulness. A seventeen-year goal-setting study by Hill et al. (2011) has shown that, when the researchers controlled for goal levels at college entry, both the level and growth of goal setting were predictors of well-being. Interestingly, changes in prosocial and occupational goals are related to changes in traits, probably as a result of individuals adopting social roles that are relevant to those goals (Bleidorn et al., 2010; Hill et al., 2011). Although it is now clear that having life goals has important consequences for health, performance and happiness, many people have difficulty choosing between the seemingly endless number of possibilities. In the old days, there was not much freedom to make choices and set goals: you just did what your parents did. Of course, this is depicting things in black and white, but the fact is that in general we now live longer, but many of us, particularly young people, do not have a clue what to do with all this extra time. Getting most young people to take part in a goal-setting intervention as part of their curriculum may thus be an important step in achieving not only higher academic performance, but also better well-being, happiness and health and greater longevity (cf. Schippers et al., 2015).

The problem so far has been that most interventions are not easily scalable for much larger numbers of people (Schippers et al., 2015). For instance, cognitive behavioural therapy, which has also been shown to give people a greater sense of purpose in life, is not readily available without the help of a therapist. The goal-setting intervention, with its potential for increasing educational quality and equality and enhancing academic performance, seems to lend itself very well to scaling up. However, the intervention should not be regarded as an extra-curricular activity; it would be advisable to make it a formal part of the curriculum for all students.

# 10. The field of behaviour and performance management

So far, the focus of my inaugural address has been on setting life goals, which has major consequences for well-being, performance, longevity, and happiness. The field of behaviour and performance management, to which my chair is dedicated, is a broad one, and encompasses several main areas of research, all of which are aimed at enhancing performance in a business or educational context. The domain of behaviour and performance management covers fields such as organizational behaviour and behavioural operations management, a multidisciplinary field that examines the behaviour of human agents in complex decision problems. Performance in this context can refer to all kinds of more or less "objective" performance, such as return on investment (ROI), decision quality, and academic success, but can also include supervisor-rated performance. Most behavioural aspects are related to self-regulatory behaviours, which have been shown to have huge potential in terms of improvements in performance. These behaviours can be assessed at the individual, team or organizational level, and often include those designed to narrow the gap between current performance and desired outcomes. Important research areas that have been identified as important in improving individual and team performance are goal setting and team functioning. Teams are the building blocks of organizations, and a third field that can give insight in performance improvement is that of organizational networks. I will discuss these areas briefly below.

The area of behaviour and performance management is concerned with the management of human factors influencing individual, team and organizational performance. Within this field, interdisciplinary research takes place at the intersection of organizational behaviour, behavioural operations management and social network theory. Behaviour and performance management covers fundamental questions such as: What combination of factors influences performance? Which activities ensure that individual, team and organizational goals are met in an effective and efficient way? How can organizations align their resources, systems and human behaviour in order to meet strategic objectives? How is performance influenced by goal setting? How do team reflexivity and team composition influence motivation and in turn performance?

# 11. Behavioural operations management

The operations management (OM) field has seen a rapidly growing interest in behavioural research, but virtually all studies focus on *individual* decision-making. How *teams* make decisions is largely ignored, even though most operations and supply chain management decisions (sales and operations planning processes or S&OP) are typically made in teams. Even recent reviews of the field have focused on the individual rather than the team (Bendoly, Croson, Goncalves, & Schultz, 2010), although this seems to be changing somewhat of late (e.g., Bendoly, 2014). Studies within economics, management and psychology have shown that individuals and teams usually do not behave in a rational fashion, but rather according to principles of *bounded rationality*, which causes people to make decisions guided by heuristics and biases, and limits their capacity to learn, act and make sound decisions. Research by Nobel prize laureates Kahneman and Simon (Kahneman, 2003; Simon, 1947, 1955, 1979) has identified numerous cognitive shortcomings that make it difficult for individuals and teams to process information rationally and effectively (for a review see Schippers, Edmondson, & West, 2014). Importantly, while teams and individuals may remain unaware of it, heuristics and biases can often cause them to make systematic errors, and hamper team performance. Team reflexivity may help in counteracting these biases and errors (Schippers, Edmondson, et al., 2014).

I have worked on the topic of team reflexivity and diversity since my PhD research. In my research, I have focused on the role of diversity and leadership in relationship to reflexivity and team performance. Also, I have developed a team-level contingency model of team reflexivity, work demands, and innovation. Furthermore, in the work that I do in collaboration with the Department of Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship, we are interested in team reflexivity at the organizational level. I have investigated the role of team composition and the power of team reflexivity – the extent to which teams reflect on their goals and modify the way that they function – to mitigate biases and improve team performance. In the upcoming years, I aim to build on this work and make the Erasmus Centre for Behavioural Operations Management a success. As a research school, we are in a good position to contribute to research in this area, as many of our faculty are doing very interesting work in this area and taking complementary approaches to the topic. It is therefore important to focus on identifying and analysing the cognitive and motivational biases that play out in sales and operations planning. These include team reflexivity, as well as team compositional variables, such as personality and diversity, which mitigate such biases. Furthermore, it is important to assess how information flows through networks in order to investigate how individual and team goal setting and reflexivity leads to better firm performance.

I will focus on three critical areas in the field where I believe we could make substantial contributions, and where I personally aim to contribute in my capacity as professor by special appointment in Behaviour and Performance Management. The three key areas that we intend to develop are: *goal setting*, and the setting of personal and team goals, rather than assigned goals; *team functioning*, and specifically how team reflexivity

and diversity are important prerequisites for goal setting; and *organizational networks*, including information flow through those networks. These areas have never been researched together before, even though they have clear links, and fit an interdisciplinary research agenda which connects behavioural issues with, for instance, operations management. Below I will discuss team functioning and organizational networks.

# 12. Team functioning

**Reflexivity**

As described above, individual reflection on life goals has been shown to be effective in improving performance and increasing happiness. In terms of work performance, prior research has shown that learning from mistakes and being able to regulate one's behaviour in order to meet goals is key (Lee, 2005). An important development in terms of behaviour and performance management is that many companies now put less emphasis on annual appraisals and more on individual feedback and development (Cappelli & Tavis, 2016; Dresner, 2008). This means that working towards goals and having meaningful work are seen as more valuable and sustainable these days (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012; Steger & Ekman, 2016), as people work from intrinsic motivation. In a society where work is becoming more and more flexible, it is important that people are self-motivated, rather than being controlled by managers (cf. Richardson, 2010; van der Meulen, 2016; Wessels et al., 2017). My work on team reflexivity fits in here in the sense that teams reflect on their team missions and goal(s) and try to improve their working methods depending on how well they are progressing towards their goals (Schippers & Hogenes, 2011).

It stands to reason that an important mechanism in enabling team goal setting to be effective is team reflexivity – a deliberate process of discussing team goals, processes, or outcomes (see Figure 6). The figure is strikingly similar to the management cycle shown in Figure 7. Team reflexivity is an important self-regulatory behaviour that has been shown to enhance individual, team, and even organizational performance (Konradt, Otte, Schippers, & Steenfatt, 2015; Moreland & McMinn, 2010; Schippers, Edmondson, & West, 2017; Schippers, West, & Edmondson, 2017; Schippers et al., 2014; Widmer, Schippers, & West, 2009). It is an evaluative team discussion process that aim to assess whether the team is on track in terms of goals, processes or outcomes (Schippers, et al., 2014; West, 2000). Although the iterative process of reflexivity can take place at different levels, individual, team and organization (Schippers, 2003), but is most often studied at the team level. Team reflexivity ideally precedes the goal-setting process, as teams need to assess the difference between the current state and the desired state and set goals accordingly (cf. Schippers, Den Hartog, Koopman, & van Knippenberg, 2008).
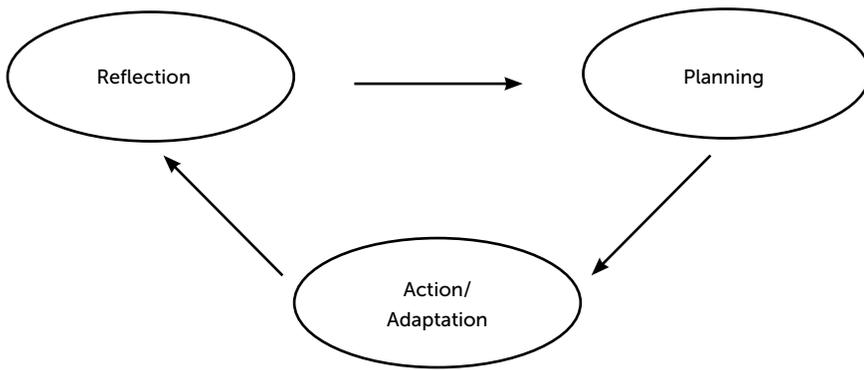
**Figure 6.** Classic aspects of reflexivity



**Figure 7:** Management cycle. From: Dresner (2008).

Numerous studies have shown that team reflexivity improves team functioning and performance (for a review see Widmer et al., 2009), although hardly any work has been done to determine whether it precedes team goal setting or improves team decision-making. As discussed earlier, it has been shown that team reflexivity can indeed function as an antidote to team-level biases and errors in decision-making. As such, it can be seen as a critical information-processing activity. Prior research has identified consequential information-processing failures that occur in small groups, such as failure to discuss privately held relevant information, biased processing of information, or failure to review whether previous decisions still hold when situations change. Team reflexivity reduces the occurrence of information-processing failures by ensuring that teams discuss and assess the implications of team information for team goals, processes and outcomes (Schippers, Edmondson, et al., 2014). Team reflexivity may be particularly important in the

area of behavioural operations management. Behavioural operations management brings in an understanding of human behaviour to the practice of operations management. For instance, it has been concluded that, in the supply and operations (S&OP) process, where the team members often have different backgrounds, the personalities involved can result in less than optimal team dynamics and hence inferior decision-making (Lapide, 2007). It is generally very difficult for cross-functional work teams to reach consensus on the direction that they will take, largely because their different functional backgrounds may lead team members to express conflicting points of view (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). This phenomenon may be even more pronounced in S&OP teams: the nature of the planning process is such that these cross-functional teams are expected to reach agreement on a whole series of complicated, ambiguous, yet interrelated issues. Team reflexivity is a key behavioural factor influencing S&OP decision-making and effectiveness. Biases and errors are less likely to occur in highly reflexive teams and this will improve the quality of the decision-making process and ultimately enhance the performance of S&OP teams. Team composition, or team diversity, is also key in team decision-making processes (Schippers, Den Hartog, Koopman, & Wienk, 2003; for a review see van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Importantly, when teams find that they have different perspectives on a task as a result of their diverse backgrounds, this may prompt them to reflect on how the team is functioning (Schippers et al., 2003). This may be linked to improved decision-making and performance.

An important prerequisite is that teams (and organizations) should have clear goals. Self-regulation (and performance management) is related to cybernetics, which is founded on the principle of negative feedback: correcting deviations in order to reach a predefined goal. For individuals to regulate themselves effectively, there are four abilities that are thought to be essential. These are: (1) the ability to scan the environment, (2) the ability to relate information obtained to the norms of the organization, (3) the capacity to detect deviations from the norm, and (4) the ability to adjust one's course of action (Schippers, 2003). If a system (i.e., an individual, team or organization) fulfils these conditions, it will be able to detect changes in the environment and can anticipate future events in an intelligent, self-regulating way (Morgan, 1986). Within such systems, organizational networks are important in the sense that social network analysis has attempted to capture relationships between group members in terms of the strength and nature of their ties. This research has proved to be useful in capturing how diversity affects the relationships formed by group members (Klein, Lim, Saltz, & Mayer, 2004; Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001), and can also be valuable, for instance, in helping to explain what happens within and between teams in a supply chain in terms of decision-making. Network analysis can be used to develop a more detailed understanding of the social relations within a work group and also be used to identify how the external network may be affected by diversity (Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001; Reagans, Zuckerman, & McEvily, 2004) and by team information processing (Borgatti & Cross, 2003). It may thus be particularly useful in operations management and supply chain management research (Borgatti & Li, 2009).

**Organizational Networks**
Individuals are part of a web of social relationships and interactions. Even in ancient times, philosophers like Plato wondered how individuals organize in networks to form functioning societies. Social network theory provides an answer to a wealth of

research questions, ranging from how individuals can work together in an optimal way to how business performance can be improved by making use of knowledge within the networks (for a review see Borgatti, Mehra, Brass, & Labianca, 2009). Early work by Bavelas and colleagues at MIT focused on network structures of individuals exchanging information, and inspired research into the small world phenomenon (i.e., the idea that we are all linked to one another by chains of six or less acquaintances, or "six degrees of separation"), as well as today's wealth of social and-performance-related research, using social network analysis. Social network theory and analysis can help us paint a more fine-grained picture of how groups of people set goals and how information flows through networks. It can explain how individuals exchange information, and energize or de-energize each other (Cross, Baker, & Parker, 2003; for a review see Schippers & Hogenes, 2011). The concept of energy is closely related to that of motivation, in that energy is needed to turn motivation into action (Schippers & Hogenes, 2011). In that sense, organizational networks are key to understanding how individuals reflect on and make use of their network ties in order to reach their goals. It is also important to investigate network churn, or changes in ties over time, resulting from, for instance, a change in goals or the implementation of a new information technology (Sasovova, Mehra, Borgatti, & Schippers, 2010). RSM, and more specifically the Department of Technology and Operations Management, can be a centre of expertise in this area, as many of our faculty are already active in it. In my own work, I have contributed to studies on network churn resulting from a new communication and information system being implemented in a hospital. The consequent effects on the volume, composition and pattern of churn could be related to the personalities of the individuals in the network. Some of my other work has focused on how individuals energize (or de-energize) each other (Schippers & Hogenes, 2011) and the role of diversity in networks of individuals within teams (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007).

I aim to expand this line of research by investigating how friendship and informational networks change after individuals reflect on and set goals (for instance, using an evidence-based goal-setting intervention) and how this in turn affects individual, team and firm performance. Also, I aim to further unravel the role of personality in shaping the dynamics of networks. A concrete plan that I have is first to assess how students change their networks after setting goals. Later, I will expand this line of research to investigate the kinds of friendship and churn in advice networks that result from goal setting in organizations.

To summarize, the primary objective in establishing a chair in Behaviour and Performance Management is to research, develop and apply insights from goal-setting theory, team functioning and organizational networks to help individuals, teams and organizations to improve their functioning and performance. As the holder of that chair, I will be contributing specifically to new research and development in the areas of goal setting, team reflexivity and team composition, and organizational networks, all areas that need further development. The objective is to undertake interdisciplinary research in the areas of behavioural operations management and organizational behaviour. As shown above, research in behaviour and performance management can have important implications for practice and public policy. It is therefore of the utmost importance that our centre should establish itself as a leader in this vital area of research.

# 13. Aim and scientific impact

For the past eighteen years, I have focused on the topic of reflecting on goals and performance, in particular on team reflexivity, and have researched the role of team diversity and team leadership in this context. In the last five years, I have studied how reflecting on one's goals can enhance the academic performance of individuals, thus helping them to achieve success in their studies and to live up to their own aspirations.

By establishing an endowed chair in Behaviour and Performance Management, RSM is making clear its commitment to making an active contribution to this important field by disseminating knowledge and ensuring that the knowledge we produce will be of real value to the world (i.e. valorisation). Performance management and self-regulation are basic human activities that lie at the heart of many fields, including supply chain management and organizational behaviour. With the addition of online elements and online support networks, this new chair also makes a contribution to the field of business information management. At the same time, most of the activities that will be carried out by the new centre are directly in line with the mission of RSM to become a force for positive change in the world. As professor by special appointment in Behaviour and Performance Management, I intend to pursue the following aspirations and plans. Regarding research, my personal goal for the coming years is to make significant contributions to the field of behaviour and performance management.

**Next four years**
Over the next four years, I will continue with several lines of research on personal and team goal setting, team functioning and organizational networks. Beyond my personal goal, I am committed to taking a leadership role in helping the School strengthen its capacity for high-quality research on behaviour and performance management. Since RSM is committed to being a force for positive change in the world, my research and implementation of the goal-setting intervention fits into that mission. I am also planning to investigate other positive psychology interventions in order to enhance the academic and career success of students and employees alike, and at the same time boost the performance of their institutions or companies. Throughout RSM, and especially in the Department of Technology and Operations Management, there is powerful culture of focusing on high-quality research, and this has already been reflected in a tremendous and ever-growing research output. In the first year, one of the first tasks for our Behaviour and Performance Management research group will be to undertake a meta-analysis of team reflexivity. Since reflection is the first stage in the iterative process of self-regulation, a meta-analysis on this topic is an excellent starting point. When I started working on reflexivity in 1999, I was one of the few researchers in the world working on it, and I think I can say that I have helped shape the field since then. In the past years, I have written and contributed to several reviews on this topic (Konradt, et al. 2015; Schippers, Edmondson, & West, 2017; Schippers, West, & Edmondson, 2017; Schippers et al., 2014; Widmer, Schippers, & West, 2009). There are now sufficient studies on this topic to warrant a meta-analysis. This will give a good overview of the field and provide a

good start to the follow-up research programme that I will be leading. Also, within those four years, I aim to ensure that the centre of Behaviour and Performance Management becomes an important cornerstone of RSM. After that, I aim to extend the research on team reflexivity, and to build a strong and vibrant research group.

# 14. The Erasmus Centre for Behaviour and Performance Management

I aim to set up and run a new centre, to be called the Erasmus Centre for Behaviour and Performance Management. This centre will host various activities in the three main areas of goal setting, team functioning, and organizational networks, and will offer an integrative platform for the work in those three areas. The Centre has just been launched by a forum on goal setting. Under the umbrella of this centre, we will also be establishing another related centre, called the Erasmus Centre for Study and Career Success (E=CS[2]), which will be dedicated to research and spin-off activities connected to goal setting. I will also present the work done by this centre at various conferences for target audiences (academic directors, programme directors, school counsellors, etc.). The initial target groups will be universities and high schools. Later we will also target companies.

After the first four years, I aim to expand this goal-setting spin-off and will work with universities around the world to help them improve their students' academic success. I will also collaborate with several universities on goal-setting research. I intend to broaden the current research, assessing, for instance, whether international students can be integrated better if they are encouraged to reflect on their goals, and if so, how this might be done. Other topics I would like to investigate are the underlying mechanisms that account for the effects of goal setting and reflexivity, possibly by looking at changes in social networks (network churn) (Sasovova et al., 2010). I see the spin-off in this area as being critical for the valorisation of the goal-setting research. My initial aim is to help make the Centre for Behaviour and Performance Management a strong and vibrant part of RSM. Apart from initiating academic and practitioner-oriented events at the School, speaking at conferences, and applying the research to practice, possibly via a spin-off from RSM, it will be important to foster a high-quality research climate for current and prospective Behaviour and Performance Management faculty and students. More generally, I aim to contribute to the development of the School, and the broader community of academics and practitioners.

## 15.  Triple impact

With my research in the area of behaviour and performance management, I aim to make a triple impact (in our department, we understand that goal setting means aiming high – as my colleague Erik van Raaij recently made clear in his inaugural address). The first type of impact is on the academic research community, and this is done by building a vibrant research group and getting our studies published in leading journals. The second type of impact is on the field of educational psychology and management, and our students in particular, by making sure that the goal-setting intervention is used by many students to improve their performance and happiness. The third and final type of impact is on the business community, and here I aim to contribute through my work on team goal setting and team reflexivity. All in all, these activities, and especially those centred around goal setting, fit with the mission of the School – and being a force for positive change in the world is the main impact I would like to have.

## 16.  Conclusion

The fact that I am standing here is partly due to my ability to delay gratification and to exercise self-control. Of course, resilience also played a role. Although this seemed to come quite naturally to me, and I trained myself in discipline and self-control from a very young age, for most people it does not come naturally. Luckily, as I have also outlined, self-control can be trained, and even making small changes to one's life – such as adhering to a regime of physical exercise or saving money – can help. That is why I think it is important that many people acquire this skill. However, without a goal in mind, self-control is not very useful. That is why, throughout this inaugural address, I have stressed the need for goal setting to enable one to lead a purposeful life. Through my research, I hope to have a real impact on people's lives through evidence-based interventions.

But we should not forget the role that our social networks play in helping us achieve anything in life, and that brings me to my word of thanks.

# 17.  Dankwoord

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Michaéla Schippers is Endowed Professor of Behaviour and Performance Management at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University (RSM). She received her PhD from the Psychology Department of the Free University in Amsterdam. Her research is located at the intersection of management, psychology and education. Her current research concentrates on team reflexivity, team diversity, social exclusion, goal setting and academic performance. These topics are applied in the fields of new ways of working and behavioural operations management. Her work has been published in some of the top journals in psychology and management, including *Annual Review of Psychology, Administrative Science Quarterly, Journal of Management, Journal of Management Studies, Academy of Management Learning & Education, Journal of Organizational Behavior,* and *Human Relations.*

In her inaugural address, Michaéla discusses the role of self-regulatory behaviours that people can employ in order to live a fulfilling life. These behaviours include reflection and personal goal setting, used to formulate a direction or purpose in life. The Japanese term "ikigai" means reason for being, and finding one's ikigai is considered to be very important in Japan. In her inaugural address, Michaéla discusses an evidence-based goal-setting intervention, which she has used within her own institution. This relatively brief intervention has been shown to have lasting results: not only does it increase the well-being of students, it also boosts their academic performance by more than 20%. It has also significantly decreased the gender and ethnic minority performance gap. The excellent results from this positive psychology intervention contribute to the mission of the Rotterdam School of Management to be a force for positive change in the world. Given the success thus far, there are strong arguments for making this goal-setting intervention a formal part of the student curriculum. This would help to boost the academic success of students and their institutions. In the address, goal setting is shown in a broader perspective, with examples from education, business and operations management. The emphasis in this address is on taking control of one's life in order to optimize performance and happiness.

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