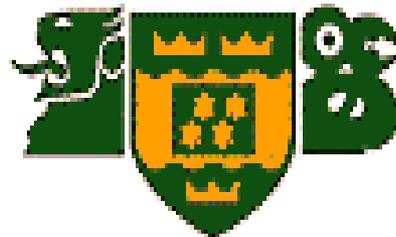# Possible Selves of New Zealanders:
An examination of the Hopes and Fears of young New Zealanders.

Presented by
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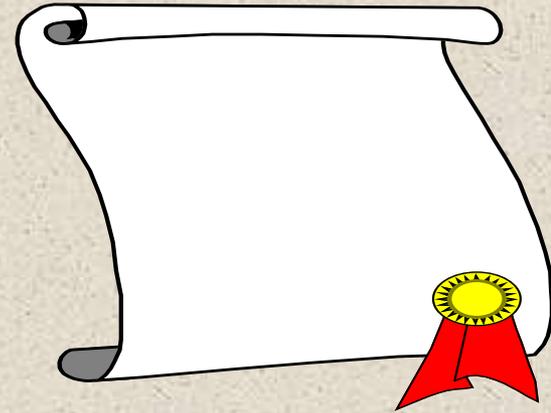Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui

Overview

1. The purpose of the study

2. What are Possible Selves

3. The sample

4. Data collection: A qualitative story

5. Qualitative Principles.

6. Data Analysis: A qualitative nightmare

7. Findings

8. Application

The purpose

To identify New Zealanders visions of their future.

To examine differences in the way that different groups of young people think about their future as dependant on factors such as employment status and ethnicity.

To identify items suitable for a Possible Selves counseling tool for young job seekers that identified that people are more than work and that full time sustainable unemployment is not for all.

To fill up my doctorate

What are Possible Selves

- Possible Selves are: -

"Schematic cognitive representations, of what people believe they may become, are hopeful of becoming or are fearful of becoming"

- Formed from past information that has been categorised in some way.
- Are multi-domain
- Provide a framework for wellbeing and information processing
- Are forward looking, individually defined and goal oriented

Sample

- 247 participants.

- 55% students - 17% unemployed - 18% employed

- 67% European - 11% Maori - 3% Asian - 10% PI - 9% other

- 52% Male - 48% Female

- 25% less than 15yrs - 43% 16-20yrs - 11% 21-30 - 21% above 30yrs

Data Collection

Interviews were used for all participants except for students and some job seekers

Had no trouble eliciting hopes and fears from youth

Most interviews were around 30 minutes long

The filled in questionnaires took on average 30 minutes to fill out.

The moral of the story:

People have a lot to say about their futures.

Qualitative Principles

- Human Beings are talkers (Harre, 1997)

- Grounded Theory. Maximum flexibility in generating new categories from the data.
  - Getting close to the data, the qualitative way.
  - People just didn't fit our model.

- Index so you can reorder. Work from the broadest to narrowest.
  - As soon as possible after data collection
  - Judgement is always necessary.
  - Process of Flip-Flop (Pidgeon & Henwood).
  - Reflective journal of decisions made along the way.

- Method section adds to the growing body of research on qualitative analysis on what works and what does not

Analysis

- A mine field of data and no where to start.

- People had idiosyncratic stories that were not captured by simple codlings.

- SPSS allowed for eight character strings. This was deemed appropriate for the generation of items

- Coding was conducted by two researchers (10 participants), correlation of 0.8.

- The total list comprised of 3487 different selves

WHY??

Because People are very idiosyncratic as to to their futures

Analysis Two

- The generation of items involved continually culling back and grouping these statements into broader and broader categories.

What did this achieve?

We were able to determine suitable items for the inventory
and
We were able to analysis item clusters among participants

What did we lose?

The nature of the data.
  - *People were more idiosyncratic than they were the same.*
  - *People do not express their futures in single words or phrases*
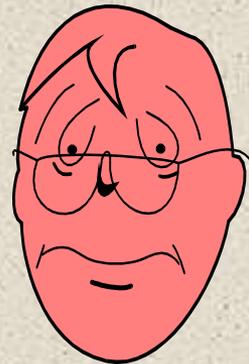
Some Key Results

The top ten hopes

happy
attractiveness
healthy
rich
create
caring
friend
liked
professional
sport

The top ten fears

attractiveness
poor
unemployed
alone
depress
sick
bitter
failure
healthy
mean

Some Key Differences

- Selection of items for comparison. At least one group had a minimum of 30% of respondents identify a particular Possible Self.
  - Bonferrino Principle: Divide the sig. level by number of comparisons for decreasing probability of chance
  - Always maintain an awareness of the sample characteristics.

- Gender
  - Hopes: Happy (Female)
  - Fears: Depression (Female)

- Ethnicity
  - Hopes: Creative (Other and New Zealander)
  - Fears: Poor (Maori, P.I high; Asians low)

Some Key Differences

- Age
  - Attractiveness, decreases with age as a fear and hope
  - The desire for happiness is highest with those under twenties.
  - Ownership and wealth decrease in importance as we age (fear/ hope).
  - Sport as a Possible Self decrease with age
  - Depression peaks as a fear between 16-30
  - Mean decrease over age
  - Not sig at higher level sick as a fear increases over time.

- Occupation
- Lots of sig differences but of most interest are
  - Students have greater desire for creativity
  - Students have more hopes to live overseas
  - The unemployed have a strong fear of being cleaners

Application

- Tying results to theory (The grounded approach).

- Items were generated that were applicable to New Zealanders

- Representative jobs for the major classifications in the New Zealand classification of jobs were identified.

- The concept of likelihood was identified as important to differentiating between various hopes and fears

- The requirement for space to include free response options was used

- The option of being able to generate story information on your future was required

- **A new focus: -**

Letting the participant drive the model not the model drive the person.