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Consent to link health data: older adults in New Zealand

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Master of Arts

In

Psychology

At Massey University, Manawatū,  
New Zealand.

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2017

### **Abstract**

With administrative data increasingly being recorded electronically, data linkage has become a popular method of research. It involves the linkage of two data sets – survey and administrative data, in the current study – to create a wider and more varied data set, with which a greater number of research questions can be examined. Seeking consent from participants to link their data is an ethical and legal requirement. However, consent seeking may create systematic bias as likelihood of consenting may be associated with a variety of health and socioeconomic variables. Variables associated with consent were examined for linkage between the Health, Work Retirement longitudinal study and Ministry of Health data sets in New Zealand. Unlike previous studies of this type, participants were older adults. Binary logistic regression revealed that Māori ethnicity (OR 0.68), Diabetes (OR 0.66), and participating for more survey waves (OR 1.88) were significantly associated with consent. The model explained 7 to 10% of the variance in consent, suggesting that older adults are not greatly influenced by these variables. Implications for research and policy are discussed.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisors Fiona Alpass and Andy Towers for your endless patience and excellent feedback, as well as keeping me on the right track when I was unsure of my direction. Andy especially, thank you for sending me down this fascinating and important avenue of study. To the broader Health and Ageing Research Team, thank you for letting me participate in your great work.

Miki Seifert, the most observant and generally excellent grammar enthusiast I know, thank you for editing the final draft. This thesis is better for your input.

Maddy, Shelly, Luke, Adam, Damien, and Mike thank you for supporting and encouraging me at various times throughout my thesis, especially when it got difficult. Finally, to the rest of my friends, family, and colleagues who supported me in any way: thank you. You made this journey wonderful.

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