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**WHAT DO I WANT TO DO  
AND HOW DO I GET THERE?**

**A possible selves approach to motivation in  
education**

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the Degree  
of Doctor of Clinical Psychology  
at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand

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## ABSTRACT

Although access to education is young person's right, the rates of school disengagement in industrialised nations such as New Zealand continues to be a matter of concern. Research that provides new information on how the schools and government departments can reach out to those students at risk is needed. In order to modify a student's school disengagement pathway it is crucial to identify students at risk (Study 1) and intervene (Study 2). The possible selves theory has been found useful to approach students' motivation. The theory suggests that the students' visions of themselves in the future act as a cognitive schema through which they interpret the relevance of present events, such as their performance at school. In turn, student's ability to see an alignment between their visions of their future and the outcomes offer by school qualifications or skills learnt has the potential to enhance their school engagement. In the first study an alternative measure of school engagement was developed to aid in the identification of at-risk students. Unlike other measures of school engagement, the Goals and Perception of School Scale (GPSS) focuses on the students' view of their future, the role that they perceive school has on it, and their perception of school. The exploratory factor analysis conducted revealed the presence of the predicted three component structure, corroborating a strong relationship between having goals and school engagement. In this study, participants who reported having education-related goals (e.g., "I intend to get NCEA level 3") were found to have higher school engagement scores. Thus, these findings support the idea that school engagement is enhanced by the alignment between students' personal goals (the students' vision of themselves in the future) and the outcomes offered by school (skills and qualifications). In addition, those who reported short-term academic goals were less likely to report in-school misbehaviour. Therefore, without having to ask about school performance and in-school behaviour the Goals and Perception of School Scale is a measure of school engagement which can aid the early identification of those students who are disengaging from school.

In a subsequent study a possible selves intervention was adapted and delivered as a school workshop. The Possible Selves Workshop was found to be a feasible brief group intervention, that

targets 14 to 15 year-olds consisting of four 60-minute weekly sessions. The content of the intervention includes the adolescents' identification and enhancement of their possible selves. In addition, it also included psycho-education, goal-setting and problem solving skills training to facilitate the students' pursuit of their long-term goals. The intervention provides a suitable environment to discuss the relevance of the outcomes offered by school with regards to the students' vision of their future. The results of this study revealed an improvement on participants' academic possible selves and plausibility of the strategies being enlisted to pursue the academic possible selves after the intervention. This change was particularly noticeable in participants who had lower baseline scores on school engagement and self-efficacy. Furthermore, there was also an improvement in the time that participants reported doing homework or studying, and on their perceived efficacy and endurance on these activities.

Although the workshop showed promise as an intervention there was not quantitative evidence to demonstrate that the improvement in participants' possible selves translates into greater school engagement (as measured by the scales utilised) and performance (i.e., better grades and harder work). The limitations of this study and suggestions for further research on the efficacy of this intervention are discussed. The studies that comprise this research contribute towards more effective identification and prevention of school disengagement and propose the Possible Selves workshop as a potentially effective intervention that needs to be investigated further.

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## PREFACE

I come from a country in which access to education is a privilege, and access to good quality education is only possible for a few. It is in this kind of context when we are able to see in full the impact that the lack of access to education has, as it is in this kind of environment where poverty and violence grow. I believe that education should be a right and not a privilege and that it is up to us as adult members of the society to ensure that this is the case. Interestingly, even in societies in which a huge amount of resources are put in place to ensure that the youth have access to it, many young people choose to leave school early.

In my experience as a teacher it was surprising to find that even among the most privileged students some did not appreciate school. Making the content of my subject relevant to my student's current interests was a constant challenge as a teacher. It was clear to me then that some of my students could not see the link between high school and their personal life goals, which made their perception of school fragile. However, it was until I arrived to New Zealand that, at an honours level class at Victoria University of Wellington, I was randomly assigned to investigate and present to the class the possible selves theory of motivation. It was a blind date that turned out to be an amazing journey.

I was then very fortunate to meet Professor Ian Evans at Massey University who had worked extensively on the topic of school drop-out and who decided to embark with me in this journey that now comes to a conclusion. This project was born and grown in an environment of cooperation, inclusion, and knowledge that Professor Evans has developed at CHERUBS lab. In this environment I benefitted from the discussion of ideas and the experience of my fellow students.

The possible selves theory of motivation helped me make sense of my observations of student's cognitions, behaviour, and perception of school. Thus, I felt thrilled with the idea of being able to contribute from the psychological perspective to a social problem that I had experienced closely; the problem of school disengagement.



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

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Tama<sup>1</sup> (age 14 years), a Year 10 student, reported: “Next year I expect to find a job, so I can help my parents to pay rent.”

We all know that being an adolescent is not easy. I have yet to meet an adult who did not experience his or her teenage years without the terrifying ambivalence of omnipotence and self-doubt feelings, impulsivity and stagnation, the emotional swings between excitement and disappointment, love and hate. Adolescence as a developmental stage breaks from the parental and adult idealisation and centres on the revolving reality of peer and family relationships. As a teacher, it can be discouraging to realise that school, the class, and the very interesting content we want to communicate to the student is at the bottom in the list of the students’ priorities. This is not new knowledge; many educators and researchers have dedicated their lives to finding ways to engage adolescents. Teaching this age group requires creativity and on-going juggling skills to keep the students’ attention. And yet, despite having committed motivated teachers and resources, as well as new didactic theoretical backgrounds, schools around the world continue experiencing undesired rates of students who drop out.

This chapter is comprised of three sections. In Section 1, I present the most relevant findings from the drop out research, including the risk factors associated with school drop-out, the proposed pathway leading to drop-out, and the identified characteristics of at-risk students. I will demonstrate

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<sup>1</sup> All names are pseudonyms and other identifying information has been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

## 2 CHAPTER 1: Introduction

that current measures aimed at helping the at-risk identification have not been updated in the light of new findings from the drop-out typology. Furthermore, the on-going need for the development and implementation of feasible intervention programmes that target school engagement is discussed later in the chapter. In Section 2, I present a review of the theories of motivation that have been used to explain school engagement. In particular, I will present the possible selves theory of motivation.

In Section 3, I outline evidence-based psychotherapeutic models commonly used with adolescents. In this chapter I will demonstrate that the current study integrated the therapeutic principles of client-focused and strength-based approaches in the development of an intervention based on the possible selves theory of motivation.

## **Section 1: The challenge of staying at school**

### **Drop out and school disengagement: The social problem**

School drop-out, defined as the act of leaving school without attaining a recognised school qualification, has a significant negative impact on society's well-being. School drop-out is a social problem whose effects can be observed at the individual, family and community level (Indicators OECD, 2009). For example, school engagement has been identified as a protective factor for depressed mood (Costello, Swendsen, Rose, & Dierker, 2008), while school disengagement has been identified as a predictor of drop out, substance use and delinquency (Henry, Knight, & Thornberry, 2012; Loeber, Pardini, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Raine, 2007). Likewise, those who drop out from school are more likely to experience long-term social exclusion (Daniels, Sellman, Sutton, Visser, & Bedward, 2003) and unemployment (Indicators OECD, 2009). For example, according to OECD data (2009), in 2007 the unemployment rate for New Zealanders with no qualifications was 53% higher than for those with a school qualification. In contrast, qualification attainment through education has been found to have a positive significant effect on the productivity and economic innovation of industrialised nations as it increases the workforce's level of skills, facilitating economic growth (Indicators OECD, 2009). Thus, governments have been encouraged to support policies and strategies aiming to enhance youth's attainment of upper secondary school qualifications, and reducing school drop-out rates (Indicators OECD, 2009).

However, the problem of school drop-out is not an easy one as, multiple factors interact and contribute to students' decision to leave school early (Fortin, Marcotte, Potvin, Royer, & Joly, 2006). Many different variables impacting on drop out have been identified. For example, family financial stressors, pregnancy, caring role in family, multiple moves, bullying, forensic involvement (Tilleczek, 2008); substance abuse (Tilleczek, 2008; Townsend, Flisher, & King, 2007); depression (Fortin et al., 2006); boredom (Wegner, Flisher, Chikobvu, Lombard, & King, 2008); school engagement (Archambault, Janosz, Fallu, & Pagani, 2009; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Tilleczek, 2008);

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academic achievement and socioeconomic status (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000). Similarly, drop out research in New Zealand has found that the most common reasons for dropping out from high school as reported by the leavers were: having feelings of no achievement, pursuing the financial incentive of employment, feeling unmotivated, being bullied and feeling dissatisfaction with the school experience (Coutts, 2007).

Besides being a multi-variable phenomenon, approaching the problem of drop-out has another challenge which is finding consensus regarding the labels and definitions used to describe it across nations and education systems. In general, the term drop out is used internationally to refer to students who were enrolled in school but have left school without attaining an upper secondary qualification (Townsend et al., 2007). In New Zealand the Ministry of Education defines and reports *early-leaver's* rates, rather than drop-out rates<sup>2</sup>. The term early-leaver includes young people who have not necessarily stopped studying but have not attained the highest upper secondary qualifications. That is, while not being enrolled for the subsequent upper secondary school term, early-leavers might be enrolled with other type of education provider such as polytechnics or training schools. By identifying early leavers, it is possible to estimate the proportion of young people that do not complete upper secondary qualifications. Nevertheless, using the early-leaver term imposes an important limitation as it becomes difficult to identify within this group (early-leavers) the proportion of young people who have stopped studying and training. It is those who stop studying or training before attaining upper secondary qualifications who are at a higher risk of unemployment and psychosocial disadvantage. Therefore, it is important to know more about this sample to be able to reach out to them before they leave school prematurely. The question many researchers have tried

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<sup>2</sup> In New Zealand education is compulsory up to the age of 16. Students who have been accepted into further training can apply for an exemption from the requirements to attend school. Otherwise, failure to attend school up until the age of 16 results in close scrutiny by officialdom. The students leaving secondary school permanently to enter the workforce, further education or training are called school leavers.

to answer is: how to identify students at-risk of dropping out, and how to reach out to those students before they do. Bearing in mind that early-leaver cannot be used as an interchangeable term with drop out, I will use the term early-leaver to refer exclusively to New Zealand data, and I will use the term drop out to present international research findings.

Similar to the construct of drop out, and in spite the wide body of research on school engagement, there is no consensus regarding the school engagement definition. The term has been used extensively from different theoretical backgrounds, sometimes referring to the students' academic commitment, affective perception of school (e.g., teachers, grounds), as well as referring to the students' level of participation in the school community and activities (Libbey, 2009). In a review of the school engagement construct, Fredricks and colleagues (2004) noted that engagement evolves through the students' development, being affected by changes within the student and in the students' environment. Moreover, they argue that future methodologies implemented and developed to measure engagement need to take into account the different variables that comprise such a multifaceted construct. The different facets of the construct include not only the behavioural and academic experience but also how students feel and think. They argue that measuring or estimating school engagement based only on teacher's reports of behaviour or academic performance would be invalid in the light of recent research. In addition, Fredricks and colleagues (2004) conceptualisation of school engagement has challenged previous ones by recommending the incorporation of the students' perspective.

Turning towards what students feel and think about school seems to be crucial if we want to understand when and why students disengage. Thus, for the purpose of this research I will refer to school engagement as the multifaceted construct suggested by Fredricks and colleagues (2004) in which the students' academic, behavioural, and affective components of the school experience are incorporated. In contrast, I will refer to school disengagement as the dynamic and evolving process that has the potential of leading to school drop-out (Evans & DiBenedetto, 1990).

## Drop out Research

In the search for information that could develop strategies to identify students at-risk of dropping out, different theories have been proposed. Such theories differ in the weight attributed to drop out variables identified as risk factors. When risk factors such as academic mediation, general deviance, deviant affiliation, poor family socialisation and structural strains have been tested, partial support has been obtained for each. That is, while poor academic achievement mediates the effect of all independent factors on school drop-out, other variables such as general deviance, bonding to antisocial peers, and socioeconomic status, also retain direct effects on dropping-out. Therefore, none of those factors has proven to be fully adequate to explain the drop out data (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000).

In fact, the more researchers dig, the more contributing variables they find, complicating the theoretical explanation of this phenomenon. However, crucial information has been drawn from longitudinal studies. For example, a longitudinal study showed that variables such as quality of care giving, parent involvement, and problem behaviours at age six had a strong predictive power of high school drop-out (Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe, & Carlson, 2000). Jimerson and colleagues (2000) concluded that these results support the idea that dropping out is a dynamic developmental process previously also described as “snowballing effect” (Evans & DiBenedetto, 1990). Furthermore, they argue that previously established predictors such as attendance, problem behaviours, peer competence and academic achievement in high school may be conceptualised as markers of presence on the “pathway” to drop out. While these predictors may accurately identify students who will drop out, they do not provide an opportunity to effectively intervene (Jimerson et al., 2000), emphasising the importance of early interventions (Evans, Cicchelli, Cohen, & Shapiro, 1995).

Considering drop out as an unfolding process which starts with disengagement has important implications for research. If researchers only look at the salient behaviour stereotypically associated with school disengagement (e.g., deviance, absenteeism, and academic failure) they run the risk of missing out on valuable information from those students who are not yet misbehaving or failing but are at-risk of dropping out or in an earlier state of the drop out pathway (Jimerson et al., 2000).

Support for this idea has come from other longitudinal studies. Longitudinal research has found that those who drop out (once considered a homogeneous group) are in fact a very diverse group. Thus, different types of drop outs have been identified that have a particular profile in terms of personal and social risk factors (Janosz, Blanc, Boulerice, & Tremblay, 2000).

Using a clustering technique from data obtained in an extensive longitudinal correlational nine-year repeated-measures study, Fortin and colleagues (2006) identified four drop out types represented in the drop out at-risk sample: antisocial covert behaviour type (18.9%); uninterested in school type (39.7%); school and social adjustment difficulties type (30.5%); and depressive type (10.7%). Interestingly, they found that about 50% of the at-risk sample (the sum of uninterested in school type and depressive type) where students whose academic performance was average, they did not misbehave, they were liked by their teachers and were considered to be indistinguishable from those who stayed in school. Thus, Fortin and colleagues concluded that in such cases lack of motivation distinguished drop outs when compared to those who stayed and complete high school. In fact, low motivation was found in two thirds of the at-risk sample, and depressive symptoms between the at-risk sample and the control group (those who stayed at school) were significantly different – urging for the clarification of the role that depression is playing in drop out (Fortin et al., 2006).

The findings of the typology studies are crucial for the design of strategies that aim to prevent drop out. Overall, research findings suggest that the earlier the identification and the intervention of those at-risk the better and that early interventions should be done at all levels, from primary to high school. Moreover, the drop out early identification and intervention needs to take into account the heterogeneity of those at-risk in order to deliver intervention programmes that are specific to their needs. In addition, it has been noted that motivation, school engagement and depression are playing an important role in a large portion of the at-risk sample and this finding need to be investigated further. Thus, the aim of my research was to contribute to the existing knowledge in the identification of school disengagement as well as in the intervention to prevent further school disengagement in the New Zealand context.

## Drop out Research in New Zealand

Contrary to the international trend, there are few New Zealand studies addressing the problem of drop out. This might be partly due to the absence of such terminology within the education system. There are some studies addressing school early-leaving, or retention and important changes have been done in the education system to address underachievement. For example, a standards-based system was developed in the 90's to tackle the problem of underachievement at the upper secondary level (Hall, 2000). The National Certificate for Educational Achievement (NCEA) is a system in which the student has the opportunity to accumulate credits by choosing subjects. The grading system is based on individual performance against standards, and three successive levels can be achieved (i.e., NCEA 1 to 3) whereby NCEA 3 is the highest upper secondary qualification attainable. Provided literacy and numeracy conditions are met, NCEA 3 is a university entrance standard. However, leaving before attaining NCEA qualifications (i.e., early-leavers) is still a problem. In 2011 only 45.4 % of all school leavers attained NCEA 3 (Ministry of Education, 2013). Moreover, the early-leaver's rates vary across school socio-economic decile bands and ethnic groups; the lowest the school decile<sup>3</sup>, the higher the proportion of students who leave without qualifications. In addition, Māori students have the lowest proportion of school leavers with at least NCEA 1, and are less likely to stay at school until the ages of 17.5 compared with any other ethnic group (Ministry of Education, 2008). Regardless of the terms utilised, the social problem of under skilled and under qualified young people exist in New Zealand, and New Zealand researches needs to catch up with it.

Leaving school without qualifications has been found to be a risk factor for underachievement and teenage pregnancy. By means of a longitudinal study that followed 502 New Zealand women from birth, Fergusson and Woodward (2004) examined the relationship between teenage pregnancy and educational underachievement. They found that pregnancy by the age of 18 years was a risk

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<sup>3</sup>The school socio economic decile band or decile reflects the average family situations and socio-economic backgrounds of the students at that school.

factor for underachievement, leaving school without qualifications, and low participation in tertiary education. However, the analysis revealed that low participation in tertiary education was caused by their poor earlier academic ability, behaviour, and family circumstances rather than a result of teenage pregnancy. In fact, the majority of the women had left school early before they became pregnant. The authors concluded that teenage pregnancy rates might be higher in women who leave school early, rather than leaving school early being higher in women who become pregnant.

Coutts (2007) conducted a qualitative study using an ecological perspective to analyse the retrospective narrative of girls who had dropped-out from single-sex schools. Similar to international research findings, Coutts found that the process conducive to dropping-out begins earlier in the student's school trajectory. In particular, family and school relationships had a major impact on the drop out decisions. In their retrospective narratives, participants identified the challenges of transitioning to new roles within their families and within society which obstructed their ability to stay at school. Thus, Coutts advocates for interventions providing a safe environment in which students receive targeted support that facilitated problem solving and career and academic counselling. Moreover, it was found that the drop out phenomenon was better understood when the setting and context were taken into consideration (e.g., school decile, ethnicity). In this sample of participants, drop out was associated with low school decile, Māori and Pasific ethnicity (Coutts, 2007).

School disengagement in New Zealand affects mainstream<sup>4</sup> schools (Ministry of Education, 2008). The highest rate of school disengagement occurs in the 16 year-olds cohort as by this time students have reached a legal age to work (Ministry of Education, 2008). Some early-leavers and students who have been alienated from mainstream education due to truancy<sup>5</sup> or significant

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<sup>4</sup> In accordance with the New Zealand Ministry of Education classification, for the purpose of this research I will refer to mainstream schools to all the New Zealand school providers that deliver standard curriculum and education, in comparison to special education providers which target students with special needs.

<sup>5</sup> Truancy is defined by the Ministry of Education as being the sum of unjustified absences and intermittent unjustified absences.

behavioural issues often turn to alternative education<sup>6</sup> providers. Clark and colleagues (Clark et al., 2010) conducted a cross-sectional study that consisted of a survey and interviews to key participants. A high rate of participation was obtained from the alternative education providers (98%) and students (62 %) of the region. The analysis showed that most students were male (70%), of Māori (50%) and Pacific (29%) descent. The results showed they had important health risks (e.g., nutrition, violence, substance use) and mental health risks (e.g., depression and suicide). In addition, their low socioeconomic status was shown to act as a barrier to access to health services (Clark et al., 2010). These findings corroborated previous research which has noted the high occurrence of violence, substance abuse, suicide attempts, and risky behaviour in this student population (Denny, Clark, & Watson, 2004; Denny, Clark, & Watson, 2003). While alternative education students have left early from the mainstream school system they have not stopped studying. Paradoxically, it appears that some of the negative consequences that have been associated with drop out in the international research (e.g., depression) are been also observed in the New Zealand alternative education student population. Research addressing the particularities of the New Zealand student population is needed to be able to provide accurate interventions.

In trying to understand underachievement, Meyer and colleagues (2009) conducted a cross-sectional study to investigate the relationship between different motivation orientations and achievement outcomes as reflected in the grade point average. A sample of 3, 569 Year 11 to Year 13 students participated in a survey. The data collected included demographic factors, NCEA achievement outcomes and self-ratings of motivation orientation, and motivation in relation to NCEA (e.g., reasons why students choose subjects, what students think about their own motivation, what students like and don't like about NCEA). In this sample, students' self-ratings of motivational dimensions were the strongest predictors of academic achievement. The personal attitude towards

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<sup>6</sup> Alternative Education in New Zealand targets those 13 to 15-year-olds who have become alienated from main stream schools, by delivering education in a different setting such as activity centres and using different methods.

school work of *"doing just enough"* predicted lower grades while *"doing my best"* predicted higher grades. Crucial information was obtained regarding gender, school decile, and ethnic differences. In particular, girls were more likely to attribute subject choices to interest and a *doing my best* approach than boys. Moreover, students from low decile schools were more likely to report *doing just enough*, less interest attributed to subject choice, and more work avoidance. In terms of ethnicity, when compared to Asian and European students, Māori and Pasifika students were less likely to report a *doing my best* approach, interest attributed to subject choice, and utility or importance of the subjects. The authors argue that in order to enhance educational outcomes, it is important to take into account the student motivation orientations whereby interventions can target student's shift towards a more adaptive motivational stand.

Subsequently, Hodis and colleagues (2011) conducted a longitudinal study that followed the achievement trajectories of a large and diverse sample of New Zealand students enrolled in Year 11. Using growth mixture modelling the authors identified two types of achievement patterns whereby negative motivational factors (e.g., Doing Just Enough) were predictive of underachievement. The analysis revealed that variables such as gender, ethnicity, size of the school, and the socioeconomic status of the community are also associated with underachievement. In this sample, boys from ethnic minorities in large school in middle socioeconomic communities were more likely to enter a trajectory of school failure. Hodis and colleagues argued that motivational factors as measured by the Survey of NCEA Goals as well as students' and school characteristics can accurately aid in the early identification of students at risk of school failure. Nevertheless, further research is needed to clarify why some students are only doing just enough to get by while others are doing their best. That is, it is important to clarify the underlying factors determining the students' motivational stand towards school.

## Section 2: Motivation

To do well at school and stay at school students need to be motivated towards it, In fact, international research findings have identified motivation as a factor that influences student qualification attainment by enhancing learner's effort and commitment (APA, 1997). The learner-centred model in education emphasises that only those strategies which take into account the student's motivation within the planning stages and during the actual instruction have the potential to achieve the desired institutional goals (APA, 1997; Cruickshank, 1990).

Although there is consensus about the importance of students' motivation in school engagement, there are yet-to-be-answered questions, such as: what motivates students? And how can we enhance motivation? There have been numerous theories of motivation, and to review them all is beyond the scope of this introduction. However, within the field of education a recent review (Martin & Dowson, 2009) found the following theories often cited: attribution theory (Weiner, 1972), expectancy-value theory (Wigfield, 1994; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) , self-worth motivation theory (Wigfield, 1994), goal theory (Dweck, 1986), self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986) and self-determination theory (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). I will present a brief description of these theories and the argument to consider possible selves theory as a theory that complements self-determination theory by providing a hook to engage adolescents in school.

Attribution theory (Weiner, 1972) argues that behaviour is guided by the allocation of responsibility or the perception of causality of a particular event. That is the attribution the individual gives to an experience influences subsequent actions, thoughts and feelings related to similar or related circumstances (Weiner, 1972, 1994). According to this theory a student's study behaviour is less likely to occur if, after having failed a maths test, the student attributes failure to the animosity she perceives from the teacher. On the other hand, if this same student attributes failure to the lack of time spent studying prior to the test, she is more likely to invest time studying harder for the next test. Although this theory highlights the importance of the individual's cognitive appraisal of the

events causality it does not explain why such events are relevant to us in the first place. That is, why do we care about the results of a maths test?

According to the expectancy-value theory (Wigfield, 1994), an individual's behaviour (e.g., effort to prepare for a maths test) is driven by a cognitive appraisal on how well they will do on the prospective activity and the extent to which they value the activity. That is, individuals have an inner drive towards success (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). It has been argued that an individual's motivation is based on the assessment of the proximity and value of the outcome pursued as well as the perceived likelihood of attaining the desired outcome (Wigfield, 1994). According to this theory students have an intrinsic motivation towards succeeding at school and moving away from failure. These ideas overlap with those proposed in the self-worth motivation theory (Covington, 1984) which argues that there is an inner drive towards protecting one's self worth, often paired by socialisation with achievement. Both these theories acknowledge the influence of the environment and socialisation on the students' drive towards success and their construed perception of efficacy (Covington, 1984; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Thus, if the student perceives efficacy and value in the task then he will be motivated towards it. While it is explained why we tend to feel good with success and try to avoid failure, it does not explain why performing or achieving in some areas is much more important to us than performing or achieving in others given equal ability expectancy. That is, what contributes to the subjective value of the task? Why do people choose one particular career path? Is it only because it seems more likely to attain? What makes it more valuable than other equally proximal choices? Is passion for what we do in life a mere equation of drive to success, perceived value of an outcome, and outcome proximity assessment? How do we explain our drive to pursue goals which objectively seem unattainable, and may temporarily diminish our self-worth?

Rather than focusing on expectancy-value or self-worth only, goal theory of motivation (Dweck, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988) argues that a student's intrinsic achievement motivation is influenced by three different sets of goals which reflect a cognitive stance towards a task. Learning and performance goals refer to whether the aim of engaging in a task relates to a drive towards the process of mastery or a drive towards an expected valued outcome. Unlike a performance goal, a

mastery goal approach to a task would seek challenge and enhance persistence regardless of the initial level of ability to perform the task (Dweck, 1986). This theory later incorporated a broader category of goals which refer to approach and avoidance goals. In this case, behaviour is influenced by a drive towards positive stimuli and avoidance of negative stimuli (Elliot, 2006). In the educational setting this theory has promoted the shift towards mastery oriented classrooms and curricula (Seifert, 2004) and explains why some students avoid class work. While performance oriented goals are associated with anxiety, mastery orientation has been found to enhance self-esteem (Robins & Pals, 2002).

Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986) has also been extensively used in the education setting. According to self-efficacy theory, human behaviour is mediated by cognitive processes centred in the individual's belief in his or her capacity to perform the task. The efficacy expectations are antecedents of behaviour and influence the likelihood of engaging in such behaviour. Subsequently, behaviour influences outcome expectations and together they influence outcome. Moreover, past performance experiences and the observation of others performing tasks add and construe an individual's self-efficacy beliefs which are drawn upon when facing novel tasks. Thus individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy are able to persist and try alternative strategies even when they initially fail a given task (Bandura, 1986; Schunk, 1991).

Derived from self-efficacy principles, educators have modified task presentation, the nature of the academic goals, and the academic feedback given to students. Motivation and performance in class have been improved by implementing tasks that represent a challenge but are achievable, provide specific goals and allow the students to set their own goals and providing feedback of progress (Schunk, 1991). Despite the best efforts of educators implementing such strategies in class, at the high school level there are students whose participation is low and are only doing just enough to get by (Meyer et al., 2009). Is their low participation influenced by their self-efficacy beliefs? How do we motivate these students? Moreover, as described by Fortin (2006) there are students who have an average performance and behaviour but drop out. How to explain the disengagement of students who silently drift away but continue working in class successfully? While

the contributions of self-efficacy theory have been useful towards enhancing teaching and preventing disengagement, self-efficacy theory is limited with regards to its ability to reach out to those students who are just doing enough to get by, or have already disengaged from school.

With no intention of diminishing the important contributions derived by these theories, there is a limitation in terms their ability to explain the diversity of human behaviour. For example, how do adolescents who face multiple goals with similar self-efficacy value choose which one to pursue? As with goal theory, self-efficacy theory reduces human behaviour to an equation that depends on the quantitative weight of an individual's self-efficacy belief to perform a given task. Instead, human motivation is likely to be linked to what makes each human being unique. Seifert has argued that (1997, 2004) motivation theories need to incorporate the role of emotions found to influence goal pursuit. While integrating the emotional dimension seems extremely relevant, the uniqueness of each student and the diversity of the behaviour observed might be better explained by theories acknowledging the influence of the self's complexity.

Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Deci et al., 1991) addressed this complexity by focusing on the quality of a person's motivation in the prediction of psychological health and well-being, effective performance, creative problem solving, and deep or conceptual learning (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Two types of behaviour are proposed that have important differences in the way they are processed and the quality of the experience associated with it. Self-determined behaviour (i.e., wholly volitional and endorsed by one's sense of self) is experienced as having an internal locus of control. In contrast, controlled behaviours (i.e., driven by interpersonal or intra-psyche forces) are experienced as having an external locus of causality. Furthermore, the theory argues that behaviour is based on three basic innate needs: the need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci et al., 1991). Competence refers to the understanding and ability to efficaciously perform required actions. Relatedness refers to the development of secure and satisfying relationships with others within the social context. Autonomy refers to the individual's capacity to self-initiate and self-regulate his or her own actions.

According to self-determination theory, in order for students to engage in education they must find value in learning, achievement and accomplishment, even when they find certain topics are not interesting (Deci et al., 1991). That is, they would value the learning, achievement and accomplishment of a subject, such as biology, even when they are interested in dancing. Deci and colleagues (1991) argue that value is attained through internalisation and integration. Internalisation and integration are the processes that proactively transform external contingencies into regulation commanded by internal processes; thus the originally external contingencies are internalised and integrated fully with the individual's values needs and identities. However, the processes of integration and internalisation depend on an environment and relationships that foster a student's sense of competence, connectedness, and autonomy. In contrast, when valuing has not occurred, the school experience is dominated by controlled behaviours and disengagement is likely to occur (Deci et al., 1991).

The question then is: how to facilitate valuing when the current experience is driven by controlled behaviours? By providing a context in which the needs of competence, connectedness and autonomy are present, the use of a possible selves approach to motivation can complement self-determination theory and provide a link between what is taught at school and student's personal interests and goals whereby internalisation and integration take place. In order to do so, the students and the educators need to take into account the students' vision of their future.

### **Possible Selves Theory**

The concept of "possible selves" was introduced by Markus and Nurius (1986) to account for a type of self-knowledge related to how individuals think of themselves in the future. The possible selves theory argues that people hold projections of the self towards the future: (1) what one expects to become, (2) what one fears to become and (3) what one hopes to become. However, possible selves are not mere dreams, goals, or intentions. Possible selves differ from intentions or dreams

because possible selves are deeply interconnected to the self-concept and have an emotionally charged narrative in which the individual plays a leading role (M. G. Erikson, 2007).

When possible selves match what the individual values and wants for him or herself (e.g., self-esteem, efficacy, meaning, continuity, belonging and distinctiveness) they are considered to have a positive valence and are referred to as a positive possible self. In contrast, when the possible selves frustrate what the individual wants to become they are considered to have a negative valence and are referred as a negative possible self (Oyserman & Markus, 1990; Vignoles, Manzi, Regalia, Jemmolo, & Scabini, 2008).

Most importantly, the possible selves theory argues that it is the presence of these visions of the self in the future which drive individual's decision making (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and self-regulation (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006).

Others have also proposed that prospective thinking defined by Gilbert and Wilson (2007) as the representation of possible futures, is a fundamental in the processes of perception, cognition, affect, memory, motivation, and action (Seligman, Railton, Baumeister, & Sripada, 2013). However, possible selves theory remains unique in linking prospection to the self-system. Accordingly, possible selves influence the process that mediates behaviour and goals by making current situations more or less relevant to the individual depending on how well current situations fit in with the visions of the self in the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Hence the individual moves towards long-term goals through small planned steps day by day and avoids feared outcomes (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). Furthermore, Markus and Ruvolo (1989) argued that through process of creating elaborated possible selves the individual accesses cognitive and affective elements to anticipate and imagine an action. This anticipated action is usually accompanied by a sequence of subsidiary actions necessary to achieve the desired goal. Thus, possible selves are the action-oriented representations of the self-schema which facilitate the translation of goals into intentions and into instrumental actions. As such, individuals judge goals to be important and worthy to commit when these goals are self-relevant and self-defining whereby the desired outcome fits within the self (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). For example, if a student has a vision of himself or herself in the future

travelling, then he or she will be likely to anticipate some of requirements (e.g., pay for air flights, accommodation) and appreciate the opportunity of a scholarship to study overseas for a year. In consequence, he or she will be motivated to work hard in the academic school work because he or she can see that school work is related to what he or she wants to become (someone who travels).

The nature of possible selves is one of evolution and flexibility. Because possible selves are a component of the self-schema, they are influenced by past self-representations and experiences (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). However, as possible selves have not been attained they are not limited to what is plausible. Therefore, possible selves are flexible and less stable than past and present self-representations (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). In addition, possible selves evolve as the self-concept changes through the individual's development and under the influence of the environment (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Cross and Markus (1991) conducted a cross-sectional study that provided empirical evidence of the possible selves' nature through the life span. In this study, participants aged 18 to 86 with diverse demographic backgrounds were asked to elicit their possible selves. The authors found that the number of possible selves elicited as well as the perceived capability to accomplish these decreased with age. Younger participants reported feeling more capable of accomplishing their possible selves. In comparison with older participants, the younger participants also elicited fewer actions to pursue possible selves and perceived that their feared possible selves were less likely to occur. Cross and Markus (1991) hypothesised that the diversity of possible selves and the perceived confidence found in younger participants corresponded to the identity instability that characterises young adults.

Some evidence of the influence of the environment on an individual possible selves was provided by a cross-sectional study conducted by Segal and colleagues (2001). In their study Segal and colleagues used self-report measures (e.g., mood, quality of life), cognitive tests, structure interviews and a narrative-based anticipated life history measure with a sample of United States young people aged 18 to 19 from a private and a public college. By means of a structured interview data was collected regarding participants' demographic variables such as family of origin, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. In this sample, education-related possible selves were affected by the

socioeconomic variable whereby participants with lower socioeconomic status had less confidence they will finish college, less likely to expect graduate training, and elicited fewer possible life roles. Segal and colleagues argued that this difference might be due to the socialisation towards school attainment and role diversity that higher socioeconomic status students experience in their family and school environment.

Ethnicity has also been found to affect possible selves development as well as the possible selves attainment strategies in a United States sample of ethnically-diverse undergraduate psychology students (Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995). In their study Oyserman and colleagues used open-ended and close-ended questionnaires to examine the relationship between ethnic identity, individualism, collectivism, Protestant work ethic and possible selves. In this sample, African Americans had higher scores in measures of ethnic identity and collectivism as well as fewer balanced achievement pairs of possible selves. Moreover, for white students the number of strategies reported to attain achievement possible selves was predicted by the endorsement of individualism, the Protestant work ethic, and balance in achievement possible selves. In contrast, for African American students the number of achievement-related strategies reported tended to be predicted by lower endorsement of individualism, higher endorsement of collectivism, and correlated positively with ethnic identity. Although the individual alone is the final arbiter for the possible selves, and the possible selves are usually hidden and protected from the judgement of others, possible selves are inevitably under social influence (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman et al., 1995; Segal et al., 2001).

Although this finding has not been replicated in other populations, its implication is to be noted. This finding shows how an observable behaviour such as achievement-related goal attainment strategies have different underlying motives associated with the self-concept, such as ethnic identity. That is, the meaning of achievement and the strategies towards it vary, depending on cultural views. Thus, a possible selves approach to motivation has the advantage to be inclusive of the influence of the environment at different levels whereby culture and ethnicity are playing a crucial role.

Not surprisingly, it has been found that possible selves awareness (thinking of the future) impacts on psychological and social functioning (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004). McElwee and Haugh (2010) conducted a study to examine the effect of future thinking clarity and frequency on the affective and cognitive patterns. A diverse sample of United States undergraduate psychology students answered scales that included possible selves, future self thinking, anxiety, depression, time perspective, optimism and pessimism. In this sample the salience of “hoped for” possible selves as well as the vividness and clarity with which one thinks of the self in the future was found to be positively correlated with positive affect and positive content of cognitions, as well as predicting positive outcomes such as more life satisfaction, and less depression, anxiety, and alcohol use. In contrast, thinking frequently about one’s future was associated with negative affect, thoughts, anxiety, private self-consciousness and greater number of feared possible selves. The authors concluded that the way individuals habitually think about the future (e.g., clarity and frequency) has an impact in the self-regulatory capacity to plan and control goal-oriented behaviour (McElwee & Haugh, 2010). As such, it is not about the frequency at which possible selves are accessed, but rather the clarity and quality of these self-representations which influences positive outcomes.

Reaching clarity in the future self-representations might be complicated by the fact that there is more than one possible self for any given person at one particular time (Cross & Markus, 1991). By means of a survey screening, Markus and Nurius (1986) identified six domains in which possible selves occur: general descriptions of the self (e.g., creative, selfish), physical descriptions of the self (e.g., good-looking, wrinkled), life-style possibilities (e.g., being health conscious, alcohol dependent), general abilities (able to fix things, able to cook well), occupational alternatives (e.g., business executive, artist), opinions of others (e.g., appreciated, popular). Similarly, analysing the responses of a sample of high school students Oyserman and colleagues (2004) described six categories of participants’ possible selves envisioned in the next year. The achievement category included visions of the future related to jobs (e.g., “to have a job and save money”), school (e.g., “to do well in school”), school activities (e.g., “to play in the rugby team”), teachers (“to get along with

teachers”), and activities not in school (e.g., “to take guitar lessons”). The interpersonal relationships category included possible selves related to family (e.g., “to have a better relationship with my sister”), and peers (e.g., “to spend more time with friends”). The personality traits category included visions of the future related to attitude, independence or maturity (e.g., “to be more responsible”). The physical selves category included visions of the future related to physical body descriptions and physical health (e.g., to be fit). The material life style category included visions of the future such as owning a car and travelling. Finally, the sixth category included visions of the future stated negatively (e.g., “not to be bullied”) and feared selves related to non-normative behaviour such as using drugs, hanging out with the wrong crowd.

The fact that one can have multiple possible selves at one time is extremely relevant as there might be different positive possible selves in conflict or at times incompatible, particularly in adolescence. For example, a student whose vision is to finish high school may also have a vision of having a part-time job to get extra money. Getting a job might compromise the student’s study time. As such the student will have to evaluate to what extent and in which circumstances pursuing those two possible selves is feasible. An example of two possible selves being incompatible would be if this student had the possible self of finishing high school while also having the possible self of working on a boat which would take him away from school for months at a time. In such cases individuals tend to assess, revise and prioritise (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989).

### **Possible Selves in the School Context**

Different studies have provided evidence of the impact of possible selves on academic performance. Oyserman and Saltz (1993) conducted a cross-sectional study that explored the differences on possible selves between two samples of African American youth. The participants came from the same county and city area, but one sample was contacted at school and another sample was contacted at a youth detention centre. Using an structured interview developed by the researchers, the participants were assessed in different areas such as possible selves, social

competence, impulsivity and communication skills (Oyserman & Saltz, 1993). In these samples difference in possible selves was not a predictor of delinquency. Nevertheless, there were important differences between the possible selves of non-delinquent and delinquent samples. While both samples of youth reported having positive possible selves (e.g., to graduate from high school), participants from the detention centre reported more feared possible selves than expected or hoped possible selves. Moreover, participants from the detention centre were less likely to believe they were attempting to attain the desired possible self and avoid feared ones. Finally, participants from the detention centre were less likely to report they were avoiding behaviours leading to the undesired possible selves. Therefore, the results suggest that having well-balanced possible selves (e.g., graduate from high school, avoiding dropping out) is an important factor influencing youth school performance (Oyserman & Saltz, 1993). These findings were further supported by Seli, Dembo, and Crocker (2009) who examined the effect of possible selves on students' self-handicapping (e.g., procrastination, exaggerated test anxiety), defensive pessimism (e.g., setting unrealistically low expectations prior to an evaluation event), and reflectivity (e.g., imagining worst case scenario without actually expecting it). Participants were high school students from the United States who answered a survey assessing self-handicapping defensive expectations and reflectivity and an open-ended possible selves questionnaire. In this sample the presence of balanced possible selves was related to lower frequency of self-handicapping and higher reflectivity which has been associated with higher self-regulation.

The motivational effect of possible selves is not restricted to balance. Oyserman, Bybee, Terry and Hart-Johnson (2004) compared the effect of having positive possible selves with and without the particular strategies to attain them. The participants of the study were United States 8<sup>th</sup> Grade (i.e., average age 13 years) students from low socioeconomic neighbourhoods who answered the questionnaires at the beginning and at the end of the school year. The questionnaires explored evidence of participants' possible selves (including self-regulation strategies) and general attitudes towards school. Using this information the level of self-regulated strategies was compared to the participants' academic performance. In this sample, the participants that elicited specific self-defining

strategies (e.g., studying, avoiding self-distraction) to attain the desired possible self were able to change behaviours which positively impacted on their academic performance. The results of this study provided evidence supporting the importance of self-regulatory possible selves which represent self-defining goals with specific behavioural strategies. These strategies contribute by maintaining positive affect, focus and motivation through the process of attaining the goal (Oyserman et al., 2004). Similarly, in a sample of British Year 11 students, having the ability to generate balanced possible selves, the necessary strategies to attain them, and alternative plans to pursue in case the preferred option is not attainable, differentiated between those at a main-stream secondary school and a pupil referral unit. In particular, it was found that domain counter-balance is not enough; it is also important that the weight of the negative self is balanced with the weight of the positive one (Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010).

Further evidence of the importance of possible selves in the school performance setting was provided by an intervention-based study (Oyserman, Brickman, & Rhodes, 2007). The sample of the study consisted of 13-year-old United States low socioeconomic school students. These students participated in an intervention that focused on enhancing the visualisation of possible desired and undesired selves as well as planning to attain the desired selves and avoid the undesired ones. The intervention resulted in improved academic performance compared to the non-intervention control group, even when the clinical group had very low parental involvement and poor academic performance compared to the control group. However, the specific content and components of the intervention were not described by the authors and there is also limited information regarding the way it was delivered. Thus, it is difficult to assess its feasibility in a different context.

The effect of possible selves related to education was also examined in a study which prompted 8<sup>th</sup> Grade students from a low socioeconomic school in the United States to think about their jobs as adults. Their answers were coded as education-dependent or education-independent adult identities and correlated with students' reports of weekly homework time and grade point average (at the beginning and end of the school year). In this sample, when future adult wage-earning identity was perceived as education-dependent, the importance of school-focused effort

became salient and students spent more time on homework and got better grades (Destin & Oyserman, 2010).

In a subsequent study, Destin and Oyserman (2010) conducted an experiment with two groups of 11-year-old students of a low socioeconomic school. The students who were attending a science class were given a class-related extra assignment by their teacher. In addition, they were introduced to the researcher, who in one of the groups presented graphs with information regarding adult earnings. In the education-dependent condition the graph showed a step-wise increase in median earnings by level of education in Michigan, making an explicit link between education and adult wage-earning identities. In the education-independent condition the graph showed median earnings by level of education in Michigan and the very high earnings of popular actors, athletes and musicians. Students in the education-dependent condition not only planned to study more but also invested more effort in school and engaged in the extra assignment (Destin & Oyserman, 2010).

In another experimental study, Destin and Oyserman (2009) presented 11-year-old students with one of two conditions. In condition one, students were given information about tertiary education, including its high costs (i.e., closed-path). In condition two, tertiary education high costs were complemented with information about financial aids (i.e., opened-path). In this sample, students in the opened-path condition predicted better grades for themselves and reported better planned effort when controlling for current achievement level. The way students could see their access to future education affected how well they wanted to do and how much effort they wanted to put into school. However, for the students whose grade point average was very low the opened-path had no effect. The authors concluded that a facilitated and opened-path mind set from early on is vital for maintaining aspirations and planning or investing in goal pursuit. For those students whose possible self as a tertiary student has been blocked, it makes little sense to focus on a future that seems unattainable. Thus, interventions should target the unblocking of such a perceived path. As it will be discussed in Section 3 of this chapter, the possible selves intervention proposed in this research incorporates a reflection on the obstacles perceived by students along with problem solving strategies to facilitate goal attainment.

Similar to secondary school students, a sample of undergraduate business students were more likely to abandon the possible self of entering into a graduate programme when the threat to access to such programme was specific (e.g., by informing students of the discrepancy between the requirements and their current grade point average). The authors concluded commitment to possible selves is subject to self-revision in response to the emergence of environmental obstacles that elicit self-doubt and anxiety (Carroll, Shepperd, & Arkin, 2009). However, the authors did not control for a baseline level of commitment towards the possible self. Thus, it is possible that the initial strength in the commitment towards a possible self is also playing an important role buffering the impact of the threat. Likewise, thinking mistakes might influence the perceived level of the threat whereby a partially specific threat can be experienced as a highly obstructing one. It is logical to propose that the revision of possible selves is a consequence of the subjective experience, and the changes within the self in the interaction with the environment.

Even though the majority of the studies that have targeted possible selves in scholar populations have worked in the context of ethnic minorities (Oyserman et al., 2004; Oyserman et al., 1995; Oyserman & Saltz, 1993), little has been done to explore the role of social stereotypes on the self-competence beliefs. A study by Oyserman, Ager, and Grant (1995) explored the hypothesis that the construction and maintenance of possible selves needs to be especially considered in the context of social stereotype vulnerability. The concept of stereotype vulnerability refers to the fear of being reduced to a negative stereotype that has been given to a group one identifies with (Steele, 1997). In the context of stereotype vulnerability, young people need to take into account problems and barriers in envisioning what is possible for them. To test this hypothesis, Oyserman and colleagues used the possible selves open-ended questions and coding method developed by Oyserman and Saltz (1993). Participants were university students who completed an anonymous questionnaire on self and identity. The study showed that there were significant differences between the number of balanced possible selves in the achievement domain. In particular, African Americans had fewer balanced achievement-related pairs of possible selves compared to the other ethnicity (European American). Additionally, results of a subsequent study in a middle school sample

suggested that participants' views of future success were influenced by their perceptions of similar others' success. This finding was also affected by gender, females being more likely to be influenced by the dampening effect of social context. The overall results of the research by Oyserman and colleagues suggested that the effectiveness of the possible selves intervention would depend on whether the social stereotypes associated to the ethnicity of the participants were acknowledged and challenged.

Possible selves research has made a significant contribution towards effective interventions aiming at increase students' school engagement. Summarising previous findings we know that thinking with clarity about the future has a positive impact on mental states (McElwee & Haugh, 2010) and thus the exploration of students' possible selves is important. Likewise, expanding the range of 'hope for' selves is especially important when there has been an absence of attaining role models, or in the context of perceived blocks (e.g., financial or related to social stereotypes). Moreover students' motivation is greater when possible selves are counter-balanced (Oyserman & Markus, 1990) and there is balance between the weight of the negative and positive one (Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010). That is, balance is important because the negative emotions associated with the feared possible selves are not overwhelming when being matched with a positive possible self. Therefore, possible selves interventions need to address not only the awareness of possible selves but also their balance.

Furthermore, possible selves are a better motivational tool when are accompanied with self-defining goals which have explicit necessary self-regulatory strategies to attain them (Oyserman et al., 2004). Thus, a successful intervention needs to facilitate the students' ability to enlist the goals and concrete realistic behavioural strategies necessary to pursue of their desired possible selves and the avoidance of their feared possible ones (Oyserman et al., 2007).

Given that the pursuit of a particular possible self is affected by how strongly connected the possible self is to the individual's sense of identity (Oyserman et al., 1995), the anxiety elicited by the perceived threats to reaching such possible self (Carroll et al., 2009) and how specific the threats are

perceived to be (Carroll et al., 2009; Destin & Oyserman, 2009, 2010), it is important to facilitate possible selves evaluation, as well as students' ability to anticipate obstacles and problem solve.

When possible selves were education-dependent students were more likely to spend time doing homework and improved their grades over the school year (Destin & Oyserman, 2010). This finding indicates that as educators we need to acknowledge the world view of the student to be able to reach to what makes sense to them. Students' motivation towards school depends on having a possible self-vision in which finishing school makes sense in the context of their future self-vision. That is, if we want to motivate students we need to know what their possible selves are and how those might relate to finishing school. By eliciting possible selves and the related strategies useful information about the self-concept arises. This information can allow students and educators to find the value of school, to identify what feeling competent, connected and autonomous means for students and facilitate school engagement.

### **Possible Selves Programme**

Hock, Deshler, and Schumaker (2009) have developed a programme that incorporates the theory of possible selves. The possible selves programme consists of the exploration of students' possible selves (hoped, expected, and feared). In this programme, students are challenged to set goals related to the actions needed to nurture their possible selves by planning how to reach goals and work towards the goals. The programme consists of six phases through which students identify and explore their possible selves. This intervention is delivered by a counsellor in one-on-one and takes between six to eight hours. During Phase 1, called "Discovering" and Phase 2 "Exploring", the students explore their strengths, skills, interests, and prominent identity components (e.g., "Who am I as a learner, person, worker?"). In Phase 3, called "Sketching", the aim is to sketch a Possible Selves Tree in which they set their possible selves as the branches with their skills and strengths as the foliage or roots. The fears that threaten those possible selves are also drawn, outside of the tree. In Phase 4, called "Reflecting", the aim is to reflect on the question "What can I be?", how to nourish

the Possible Selves Tree, and how to protect it from the fears. The reflection also includes the need to have balance within the branches of the tree and how learning and school achievements can help to attain the desired possible selves. In Phase 5, called “Growing”, the aim is to answer the question “How do I get there?” In this phase the student’s creativity is used to break down the ultimate goal into several specific goals that will enable the student to attain the long-term one. In Phase 6, called “Performing”, the aim is to regularly revisit the Possible Selves Tree and answer to the question “How am I doing?” in order to modify goals and action plans if necessary. In addition, this phase also aims to celebrate goal attainment and revisit originally elicited possible selves

This programme addresses the importance of possible selves awareness, balance, and provides students with basic goal setting skills to construe self-regulatory strategies that can be self-evaluated. However, it lacks of a clear psychotherapy approach for the programme delivery. Moreover, it does not explicitly addresses the challenges of having conflicting possible selves and does not provide students with psycho-education regarding reward immediacy bias, the link between education and employment, and the importance of self-care and help-seeking behaviour (e.g., identifying who can help them and accessing such resources). Furthermore, the Possible Selves Programme does not address the relevance of peer and family relationships. In spite of the seemingly feasibility of this programme its effectiveness has not been examined.

### **Section 3: What kind of intervention?**

The information derived from the theories and research on motivation and school drop-out points towards the importance of early identification and intervention in order to prevent school disengagement. However, few studies have developed and trialled effective feasible interventions. Moreover, those studies have not been explicit about the psychotherapeutic background underlying the type of intervention. The process of psychotherapy has been defined as a restorative relationship between a therapist and a client who has the intention to change (Evans, 2012). Thus, having a defined psychotherapeutic approach is fundamental, as the interventions designed have to be targeted for the particular age group. Although interventions can be implemented as early as pre-school, for the purpose of this study I will focus on the evidence-based approaches to working with adolescents. To do so, it is also important to briefly reflect on what we know about this particular developmental stage.

The concept of adolescence has been extensively discussed among theorists who have observed how society's expectations and definitions of the term have changed over time (Enright, Levy, Harris, & Lapsley, 1987). Whereas for most of the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, adolescents were expected to enter the workforce and start a family, the adolescents of today are not (Lesko, 2012). Despite scientists' efforts to remain objective, a holistic conceptualisation that takes into account the psychosocial components of this developmental stage is invariably affected by social context (Payne, 2006).

According to Erikson's stages of Psychosocial Development, the adolescent period is characterised by a transition in which individuals become more independent and are faced with new roles and decisions about their future (e.g., career, relationships, and families). Individuals are leaving their roles as children and at the same time they are differentiating themselves from parents and other adults. The struggle to find one's own identity and accommodate the new roles can at times be experienced as confusing (E. H. Erikson, 1994). Given that psychosocial development is dependent of the social context; cultural differences apply. In some collectivistic cultures

individuation is not a defining characteristic of this developmental stage. For example, in the traditional Māori world view, independence and individualistic decision making is undesirable as they create a disconnection from the persons' origins and where their strength lies (Durie & Hermansson, 1990). Similarly, within traditional Chinese culture adolescents are expected to follow their parents' wishes regarding education and career options (Eyou, Adair, & Dixon, 2000).

During adolescence social life becomes increasingly important, and is associated with well-being. Positive psychological traits have been significantly associated with peer and family supportive relationships (Schonert-Reichl, Buote, Jaramillo, & Foulkes, 2008). In particular, peer acceptance has been found to be related to moral reasoning (Schonert-Reichl, 1999) and academic achievement (Wentzel, Barry, & Caldwell, 2004). In fact, the availability of social support has been found to be a mediator between stressful events and depression in adolescence (Jose & Ratcliffe, 2004).

From the cognitive point of view, Piaget proposed that a specific shift from concrete to abstract and hypothetic-deductive reasoning occurred in early adolescence (Piaget, 1971). As a result, decision making was thought to be increasingly guided by logical thought (Payne, 2006). However, it has been found that while impulse control and response inhibition develop linearly during adolescence, the development of the reward system does not. Thus adolescents are hyper-responsive to rewards which directly affect decision making, particularly in the context of emotional and social factors (Blakemore & Robbins, 2012). Though historically it has been assumed that adolescents tend to make incompetent decisions, another school of thought argues that adolescent decision making is in fact quite effective as it fits the purpose and intentions behind it (Keating, 1990). For example, Geier and colleagues (2010) found that when an extra reward was offered, adolescents performed as well as adults in a response inhibition task. The adolescent brain is still developing (e.g., myelination processes are strengthening neuronal connections), and the use of areas of the brain associated with monitoring, planning, and focussing is not automatic as in the adult brain. However, when adolescents are motivated they can make use of the executive functions to resist temptation and focus on such a task, though not yet automatically as in the adults. That is,

what might be seen as impulsivity and poor decision-making is in fact a discrepancy between adolescent and adult ideas of what is valuable and rewarding. Thus, it is argued that in reality, there is a discrepancy in the underlying motives behind such decisions rather than a level of incompetence from the adolescent. As such, it is proposed that the adolescent cognitive abilities and behaviour are adaptive to the challenges of forming identity, belonging to and constructing a supportive social network, all of which require cognitive flexibility that allows the search for novelty (Spear, 2000). Thus, moderate risk-taking may perform a role in the psychological development promoting self-confidence, initiative, and stress tolerance (Moore & Parsons, 2000). In an experimental study, Gardner and Steinberg (2005) found that adolescent risk-taking behaviour was equivalent to the adult one when performing a risk-taking task in a videogame. However, unlike the adults, the adolescent risk-taking behaviour increased if the participant was being watched by friends, negatively affecting their task performance. Gardner and Steinberg argued that this findings support the idea that adolescents are competent when making decisions. Moreover, they argued that adolescent decision making is impacted by the adolescent reward analysis, in which peer relationships have a greater pay-off than for adults.

The existing evidence and knowledge about the cognitive development during adolescence is of particular importance as it informs the planning, content and delivery mode of interventions that target this particular age group. First, it is important to facilitate autonomy by acknowledging the competence of adolescents to make good decisions. Second, if we want to understand what motivates young people it is crucial to take into account that, for adolescents more than for adults, goal pursuit is affected by the value and immediacy of the reward. Thus identifying what adolescents find rewarding is useful when facilitating the pursuit of their long-term goals as they can use such information to increase perseverance and focus. At the same time, it is relevant to be aware that adolescents look for the reward of social interactions. Hence, adolescents' social needs need to be integrated into the planning and content of the interventions.

### **Strengths-based approach to working with adolescents**

Strengths-based philosophical approach has been found to be effective when working with adolescents. Strengths-based therapies assume that the adolescent is competent to make changes to their situation and make better decisions (Bertolino, 2010). In fact this approach assumes that the process of change in the adolescents' life is already happening as good decisions are being made (e.g., by attending a therapy session) and that it is the role of the therapist to facilitate the awareness of such adaptive behaviour as well as to amplify it. The underlying assumption is that the adolescent is the expert about his or her experience, and that adolescents have within themselves and their social systems the resources and capabilities for change. Therefore it is the therapist's role to draw from the adolescents' self-knowledge (i.e., knowledge of one's particular mental states, beliefs, desires, and sensations) and their own resources (including the client's social system), to facilitate change (Bertolino, 2010). Being based on the principles of client contribution, change as a process, the importance of the therapeutic relationship and alliance, cultural competence, and hope (Bertolino, 1999, 2010), the strengths-based approach shares with self-determination theory its strong emphasis on autonomy, connectedness, and competence. Ryan and Deci (2008) proposed that engagement in the therapeutic process depends on whether the client perceives an internal locus of causality, which is in turn, the base for integrated learning, behavioural change, and positive outcomes. They argue that the perceived internal locus of causality occurs when the client internalises responsibility for the process of change (Ryan & Deci, 2008). In line with self-determination theory, the strengths-based approaches draw from self-knowledge, promote client's choice through the clarification of values and goals, promote ownership, and personal responsibility. To a certain extent, strengths-based approaches also promote awareness.

In order to be able to enhance change, strength-based therapies might use future orienting techniques that encourage young people to imagine their future, to think about what they want and what they don't want from their present (e.g., crystal ball activity) and then start building, step by step, a path towards that preferred future vision (Bertolino, 1999). Accordingly, Evans (2012) argues

that assessing young people's visions of their future is helpful as they provide a motivational mechanism that influences behaviour change.

In general, strengths-based therapeutic approaches have been used with non-clinical samples in which the level of psychopathology is minimal and the diagnosis itself is not the intervention's target (Bertolino, 2010). Although there is an implicit knowledge of goal setting and problem solving strategies embedded in such therapeutic processes, these therapeutic approaches are not intending to teach strategies. Likewise, the explicit transmission of information which is relevant to the adolescents' situation (e.g., what is known about anxiety or depression) is not communicated to the young person. Within this framework, informing about mental health is not considered relevant in the process of change. Thus, the adaptive behaviour increases and the problematic behaviour decreases but, the adolescents leave therapy knowing as much about the processes that took them to dysfunction as they knew before. Arguably, adolescents' self-understanding remains the same, and has not gained awareness of the strategies used to cope. Thus, the adolescent misses out on the growth that knowledge about one's own processes might provide, which in turn, might help him or her to empathise with, normalise and validate other's experiences. Furthermore, there is no development into the extended autonomy and competence derived from the acquisition of a new set of skills to be applied in times of need. In order to address these limitations strengths-based approaches can be complimented with specific goal-setting, and problem-solving skills training as well as with a psycho-education (i.e., information, education, materials or feedback that is relevant to the adolescents' experience) component.

Regardless of the therapeutic approach utilised, research findings have pointed out the importance of the therapeutic relationship as a factor that produces change in psychotherapy (Bertolino, 2010; Lambert & Barley, 2001; Yalom, 2009). Lambert and Barley argued that the therapeutic relationship is influenced by therapist variables such as interpersonal style and attributes, the empathy, warmth and congruence transmitted by the therapist and the therapeutic alliance (i.e., the client's contributions to the relationship).

Taking into account the effect of the therapeutic alliance and relationship is of particular importance when working with adolescents as motivation to engage in treatment is often low (Bertolino, 1999). Therefore, effective therapeutic approaches to work with adolescents need to pay particular attention to the process of engagement. Working with peers and peer interactions has been found to be highly valued and rewarding for adolescents (Steinberg, 2008). Therefore, the use of group format interventions with adolescents provides an opportunity to facilitate engagement (e.g., the adolescent does not feel singled out), promote peer support, and enhance social skills.

There is not going to be one single intervention to prevent school disengagement and drop-out. Instead, under a given set of principles a variety of evidence-based interventions can be developed. For the purpose of this research, I am interested in an intervention that addresses the students' perceived role of school in their visions of the future. The underlying assumption is that information processing is biased in favour of stimuli that are concordant with the relevant compelling possible self (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). If students see school as useful in terms of their long-term future they would be more likely to find motivation to meet the necessary commitments to stay in school.

The proposed intervention integrates strength-based principles whereby the aim is to draw from the students' self-knowledge (i.e., their idiosyncratic view of their situation, what they know about themselves) and resources to facilitate the elaboration of compelling possible selves. The more compelling the possible self is, the more self-regulatory it is (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). Therefore, the exploration of the students' possible selves might be used as a tool to kindle students' motivation and engagement. Because possible selves are based on self-knowledge, its exploration provides the therapist with an opportunity to listen to the adolescent and have insight into his or her idiosyncratic view while doing a concrete activity together. As the students' idiosyncratic view is used in the exploration of goals and values, the role of school can be examined and discussed.

Seligman and colleagues (2013) propose that the role of psychotherapy, is to tackle maladaptive prospective thinking by enhancing the prospection of alternatives, developing more effective prospection, disconfirming unrealistic prospectations, incentivising the future (e.g., with

rewards), and building meaning and purpose. For example, when working with clients who suffer from anxiety, one of the therapy targets might be to re-structure their catastrophic thinking (Seligman et al., 2013). In contrast with clinical samples, Oyserman and colleagues reported the presence of both positive and negative young people's possible selves in the educational setting (Oyserman et al., 2004). Taking into account Oyserman's findings and given that in this research the participants compose a non-clinical sample of mainstream high school students it was assumed that adaptive prospective thinking already existed within adolescents. As such the purpose of exploring possible selves is to identify them and to facilitate their amplification to make them more compelling (building meaning and purpose). In this process, goal setting and problem solving skills training are used to enhance prospective thinking and facilitate students' possible selves attainment.

Likewise psycho-education can be used to educate participants about how to incentivise the future (e.g., the importance of self-care and rewards in the pursuit of a long-term goal) as well as to challenge unrealistic projections. For instance, the idea that school qualifications are not needed to get a job as a truck driver, when in reality the job market has become extremely competitive and qualifications are needed. In addition, by choosing a group modality instead of a one-on-one intervention the inherent adolescent bias towards peer relationships is also incorporated.

In the following chapters I present a series of studies that aim to contribute to the existing knowledge in the areas of identification and prevention of school disengagement. In Chapter 2, I present a study that aims to contribute towards the identification of school engagement. I developed a measure of school engagement. This measure linked the findings from the drop-out research with the findings from the possible selves research on education. That is, the finding that at risk students are a heterogeneous group which can no longer be thought as those who misbehave (Fortin et al., 2006) and the finding that students who endorse a education-dependent goals are more likely to engage in school (Oyserman, Johnson, & James, 2010). As such the developed measure incorporates students' visions of the future in relation to the school outcomes in the New Zealand context. In Chapters 3 to 6, I present a study in which a possible selves school-based intervention

was delivered to 24 Year 10 New Zealand students to increase motivation towards school. Finally, Chapter 7 contains the overall conclusions derived from the findings of this research.

# CHAPTER 2 : THE GOALS AND PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL SCALE

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## Rationale

The identification of students who have disengaged from school or who are in the process of disengaging is a first step to tackle the social problem of young people leaving school without qualifications. Before any intervention can be delivered or targeted it is important to be aware of the level of the students' school engagement. Findings from drop out research emphasised the heterogeneity of those who drop out. Moreover, drop out findings pointed towards the need to abandon the at-risk stereotype of disengagement that has been historically represented as the misbehaving student who underachieves (Fortin et al., 2006). While incorporating cognitive, emotional, and behavioural components of the school experience, effective measures of school disengagement face the challenge of collecting other than the typical type of behavioural engagement information such as in-class misbehaviour (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Markus and Ruvolo (1989) suggested that possible selves are the bases of goals, intentions and goal-directed behaviour. Oyserman and colleagues (2010) found that students who endorsed possible selves that translated into education-dependent goals showed higher levels of school engagement. Taking into account these findings, this study aimed to explore whether information about students' goals could effectively provide information about school engagement. The following research questions were formulated; Can the relationship between students' goals and school engagement found by Oyserman and colleagues (2010) be captured in a scale? To what degree does this measure relate to a previously reported measure of school engagement? Based on the previous research the hypothesis of this study was that students' goals, in particular academic goals as well as intention to achieve such goals, would be related to the students' school affect and would be an indicator of school engagement. To test these hypotheses a scale was developed that

included the constructs of school affect, short-term, and long-term goals. The scale developed in this study was analysed in terms of its factor structure. In addition, in order to address the second research question, the convergent validity of the scale developed was demonstrated by exploring its relationship with a previously validated measure of school engagement. In particular, the convergent validity of the academic goals construct and the behavioural subscale from the previously validated measure was explored.

Students who have clear long-term goals and think about their future are more likely to engage in school (Oyserman et al., 2004). That is, provided those goals are linked to the outcomes offered by school in terms of skills and qualifications. Thus, it was expected to find that students' visions of themselves in the future in which education is important would translate into short and long-term goals that are related to school. These school-related goals would impact on the affective perception they hold towards school, making the school experience relevant. According to possible selves theory, the relevance of school outcomes would act as a motivator to implement self-regulatory strategies to achieve such goals. For instance, if a student who has a vision of him or herself as an airline pilot knows what skills and qualifications are required to attain such long-term goal would be more likely to be motivated to take classes in maths and physics and to work hard (engage) in this academic school work. As long as he or she can see that maths and physics as taught is related to what he or she wants to become then this students' short-term goals would be oriented towards working hard in those subjects and attain the required qualifications (e.g., NCEA 3).

## Method

The *Goals and Perception of School Scale (GPSS)* was developed to explore the relationship between three main constructs that have been related to school engagement: students' long-term plans, students' short-term academic goals, and students' school affect. In Phase 1 of the development of the scale I consulted the relevant literature addressing possible selves, goals, school engagement. The most relevant studies have been presented in Chapter 1. As a result of this review of the literature I was interested in exploring whether information about students' goals could effectively provide information about school engagement. I generated 25 items which were designed to reflect student's affect while at school as well as students goals, especially education-related goals in the New Zealand context. These items were examined in supervision and later presented to a group of five post-graduate psychology students who were blind to the researcher's hypothesis and worked individually generating categories and providing feedback regarding the wording of the items. The information obtained from this task was used to refine the wording of the items and to eliminate those items that were considered ambiguous. In a following task a new group of five post-graduate psychology students also blind to the researcher's hypothesis and who worked individually were asked to group the items in three categories and to name the categories according to the items allocated. The items that were found to load across all three of the categories created were eliminated from the pool. There was a common agreement between raters so that one of the categories reflected an affective component, while the other two reflected long-term and short-term goals. Using this information the items were further refined.

As shown in Table 1, an item pool of 18 self-report statements was constructed to be rated on Likert-type responses that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Some items intended to reflect the affective perception of school (e.g., "When I am at school I feel sad"). Other items intended to reflect students' education-related future plans (e.g., "I don't care about my future", and "I intend to attain NCEA Level 3"). The education-related items were bonded to the New Zealand educational system, as they reflect the students' intentions to pursue national secondary and upper secondary qualifications (i.e., NCEA). The items were randomly arranged to avoid response bias by

inter-collating statements designed to elicit a positive response with statements designed to elicit a negative response.

### **Pilot Survey**

To test the feasibility of the items generated, the scale was trialled on a small sample. The pilot survey took place in the surrounding area of a city mall from three to five in the afternoon. Participants were 31 high school students age 16-18 years; the average participant age was 16.6 years ( $SD = 0.67$ ). The gender composition consisted of 33% males and 67% females. My research assistant and I approached the potential participants and invited them to take part in the survey. The survey completion time was of 10 minutes in average. In appreciation for their participation participants were thanked and offered a chocolate. Data from the pilot study revealed a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .79. The inspection of the correlation matrix showed many coefficients of .3 and above. The "I intend to get NCEA level 2" item was identified as redundant. Those students who intend to attain NCEA 3 are required to attain NCEA 2 already. Moreover, by age 16 students are expected to have attained NCEA 2. Thus, this item was considered problematic and it was removed from the scale to refine it. The scale's Cronbach alpha increased to .82 after the "I intend to get NCEA level 2" item was removed. Once the scale was refined it was presented to a larger sample. In contrast the item "I intend to get NCEA Level 1 only" was not found to be problematic. By asking the participants if that was the *only* qualification they wanted to attain this item remains relevant for those who had already attained NCEA 1.

### **Participants**

One hundred and fifty eight high school students participated in the study. The average participant age was 16 years ( $SD = 1$ ), 28% males and 72% females. Seven percent of the participants were enrolled in Year 11, 48% were enrolled in Year 12 and 44% in Year 13. The ethnic representation in the sample was as follows: 77% self-identified as New Zealand European; 11% as Asian; 5% as Pacific Peoples; 3% self-identified within the Middle Eastern/Latin American/African option; 1% as

Māori; and 1% as other. When compared to data from the 2006 New Zealand Census (Ministry of Social Development, 2010) the sample participating in this study was not representative of the high school population of students of Māori and Pacific nation descent.

Table 1  
*Goals and Perception of School Scale Original Item Pool*

Latent Concept	Item
Long-term Goals	1. I have plans for my future.
	2. I DON'T care about my future.
	3. I need to finish school to attain my goals for the future.
	4. I believe school will be useful to me in the future.
	5. School DOESN'T fit in my plans for the future.
	6. I know what I want in the future.
Short-term Academic Goals	7. I intend to get NCEA Level 2.
	8. I intend to finish school.
	9. Staying at school is better than dropping out.
	10. I intend to get NCEA Level 1 only.
	11. I intend to get NCEA Level 3.
	12. I intend to go to university or polytechnic.
School Affect	13. I get bored in days I DON'T go to school.
	14. When I am at school, I feel angry.
	15. When I am at school, I feel appreciated.
	16. When I am at school, I feel sad.
	17. I really like being at school.
	18. When I am at school, I feel safe.

## Measures

The *Goals and Perception of School Scale (GPSS)* was developed and initially tested in this pilot study to explore the relationship between students' long-term plans, students' short-term academic

goals and students' school affect. Items are scored so that higher numbers indicate more long-term plans, students' positive short-term academic goals and students' positive school affect.

The *School Engagement Scale* [SES] (Archambault et al., 2009) is a 15 item self-report scale, reported by its authors to be a reliable measure for the prediction of drop out and school engagement. The scale has 3 subscales: the behavioural subscale includes items such as "I disrupted the class on purpose"; the affective subscale includes items such as "I am happy when the work is quite challenging"; and the cognitive subscale includes items such as "I spend much time in mathematics". For the purpose of this study some of the original scale items were re-worded to make them consistent across the scale. Responses were provided in a 5-point Likert type that ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*quite often*). Items are scored so that higher numbers indicate higher school engagement (see Appendix J). As shown in Figure 1, in the sample of this study the SES showed a normal distribution and an internal consistency of Cronbach alpha = .83. The SES subscales had an internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha = .73 for the Behavioural Subscale, .84 for the Affective Subscale, and .66 for the Cognitive Subscale. Additionally, the negatively worded items were reversed prior to the analysis.

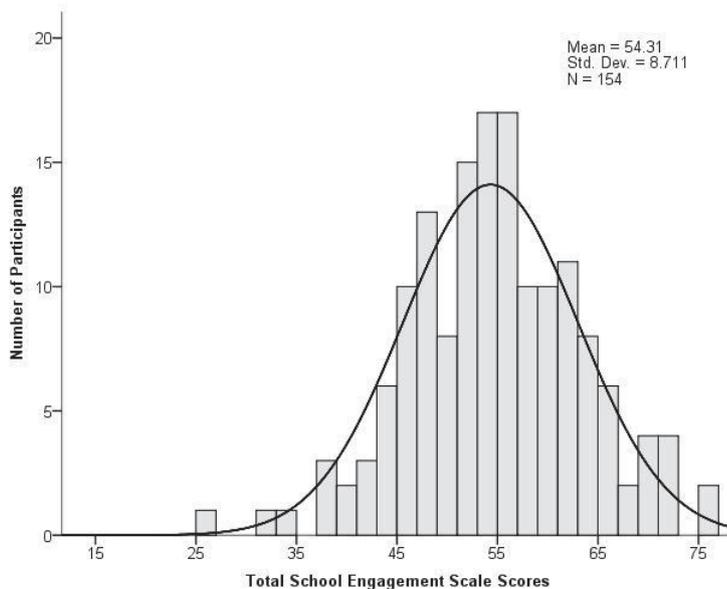


Figure 1. Distribution of School Engagement Scales scores.

## **Procedure**

This study was conducted after the full approval of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee was obtained (Southern A, Application 10/50). Participants were invited to take part in an online survey by means of an advertisement posted on Facebook (see Appendix C). The advertisement targeted profiles with the following characteristics: New Zealand residents, 16-18 years of age, English speaking, currently enrolled in high school. Those interested in participating were directed to the online survey placed on the Massey University website. This portal was user friendly and welcomed the visitor presenting the information sheet. The information sheet clarified anonymity and terms of consent (see Appendix B). If after reading the information sheet participants were still interested in taking part of the survey they were instructed to click on a button which took them to the survey. The survey started asking participants about their demographic information. Then participants were instructed to carefully read the scale statements and chose the response that best described how they had been feeling or thinking most of the time in the last two weeks.

## Results

An alpha level of 5% for all statistical analysis was adopted in this study. Descriptive statistics and inferential analyses were calculated using SPSS 17. Prior to the analysis, scores for the negatively worded items in the GPSS were reversed. The distribution of the participants' responses was examined (see Figure 2). Means, standard deviations, kurtosis, and skewness values are presented in Table 2. In the preliminary analysis it was noted that the kurtosis and skewness values for the GPSS items ranged from -.61 to -.26.73 and -4.81 to .02 respectively. Skewness and kurtosis values were divided by two times their standard error and absolute values higher than two were considered a significant departure from normality. For the scale total scores and for some items the skewness and kurtosis absolute values indicated a non-normal distribution of the data (Brown, 1997). In order to address the assumption of normality these items of the GPSS with absolute values higher than two were first reflected and then transformed using the inverse method. Analyses of the data by means of factor analysis and multiple regressions were conducted separately using the raw and transformed data. It was noted that the overall results, explained below, using the transformed items did not change when compared to the results obtained using the raw data. Therefore, I decided to use the raw data for the factor analyses reported in this study.

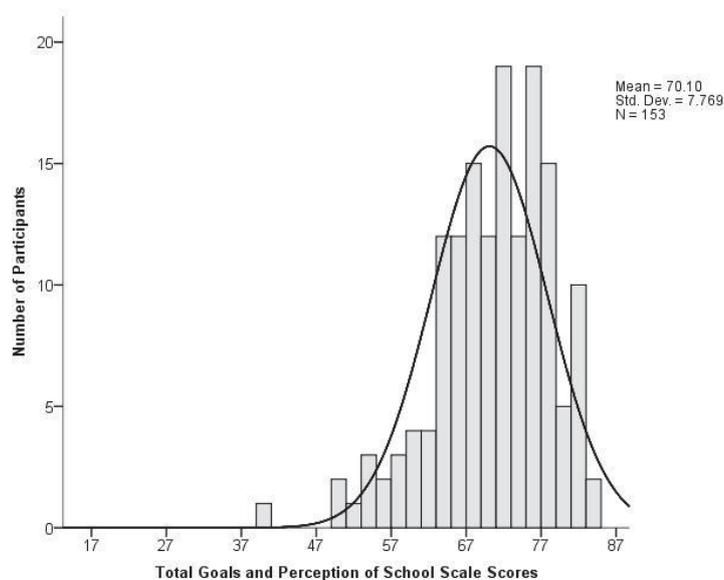


Figure 2. Distribution of the Goals and Perception of School Scale scores.

Table 2  
*Goals and Perception of School Scale Descriptive Statistics.*

Latent Concept	Item Number	Variable	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Skewness	Kurtosis
Long-Term Goals	1	I have plans for my future.	4.36 (0.80)	-1.35	2.03
	2	I DON'T care about my future.	4.82 (0.54)	-3.91	19.08
	3	I need to finish school to attain my goals for the future.	4.60 (0.76)	-2.32	6.26
	4	I believe school will be useful to me in the future.	4.35 (0.84)	-1.73	3.91
	5	School DOESN'T fit in my plans for the future.	4.39 (0.89)	-1.82	3.74
	6	I know what I want in the future.	4.08 (1.03)	-.96	.35
Short-Term Academic Goals	8	8. I intend to finish school.	4.78 (0.61)	-3.50	14.12
	9	Staying at school is better than dropping out.	4.33 (0.88)	-1.61	3.28
	10	I intend to get NCEA Level 1 only.	4.84 (0.57)	-4.81	26.73
	11	I intend to get NCEA Level 3.	4.64 (0.83)	-2.90	8.78
	12	I intend to go to university or polytechnic.	4.60 (0.72)	-1.99	4.35
School Affect	13	I get bored in days I DON'T go to school.	3.04 (1.08)	.02	-.61
	14	When I am at school, I feel angry.	3.87 (0.90)	-.57	.14
	15	When I am at school, I feel appreciated.	3.07 (1.11)	-.08	-.56
	16	When I am at school, I feel sad.	3.56 (1.09)	-.41	-.51
	17	I really like being at school.	3.24 (1.05)	-.36	-.32
	18	When I am at school, I feel safe.	3.49 (1.01)	-.43	-.17
GPSS Total Score			70.10 (7.77)	-.82	1.00

Note. Item 7 is no longer included.

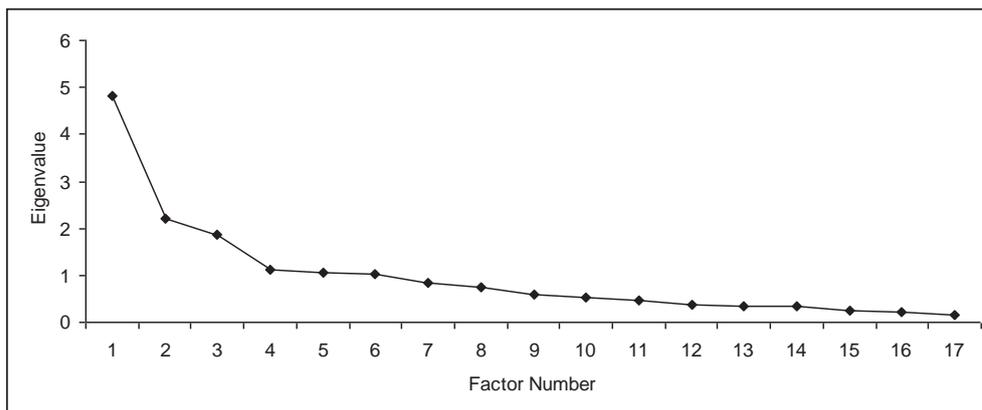
The 17 items of the GPSS were subjected to principal components factor analysis using SPSS. In order to do this, the data were assessed for their suitability for exploratory factor analysis. The analysis of internal consistency of the GPSS revealed a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .83. The inspection of the correlation matrix showed several coefficients of .3 and above. The factorability of the correlation matrix was supported by the Kaiser-Meyer-Okin value of .76 which exceeds the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974) and by the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954), which reached statistical significance.

Table 3  
*Goals and Perception of School Scale Component Factor Loadings*

Latent Concept	Item Number	Item	Component						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	
Long-Term Goals	4	I believe school will be useful to me in the future.	0.70						
Affect	15	When I am at school, I feel appreciated.	0.65	-0.53					
	14	When I am at school, I feel angry.	0.64	-0.35					
	17	I really like being at school.	0.63	-0.48					
Long-Term Goals	3	I need to finish school to attain my goals for the future.	0.63	0.31				0.44	
Short-Term Academic Goals	8	I intend to finish school.	0.63	0.35	-0.39				
Affect	16	When I am at school, I feel sad.	0.61	-0.45			-0.48		
Short-Term Academic Goals	11	I intend to get NCEA Level 3.	0.60	0.39	-0.46				
Affect	10	I intend to get NCEA Level 1 only.	0.56	0.37	-0.32			-0.33	
	18	When I am at school, I feel safe.	0.54	-0.51					
	5	School DOESN'T fit in my plans for the future.	0.48	0.36			-0.35		
Long-Term Goals	1	I have plans for my future.		0.37	0.77				
	6	I know what I want in the future.	0.38		0.75				
Affect	13	I get bored in days I DON'T go to school.					0.66		
Short-Term Academic Goals	9	Staying at school is better than dropping out.	0.41					0.57	0.39
Long-Term Goals	12	I intend to go to university or polytechnic.	0.38	0.40				-0.41	
	2	I DON'T care about my future.	0.38						0.76
% Variance Explained			28.3	12.9	11.0	6.58	6.27	5.95	

Note. N= 158. Only loadings > .30 are displayed. Item 7("I intend to get NCEA Level 2) is no longer included.

As presented in Table 3, principal components analysis of the 17 scale items revealed the presence of 6 components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 28%, 13%, 11%, 7%, 6%, and 6% of the variance respectively. An inspection of the scree plot presented in Figure 3 revealed a clear break after the third component.



*Figure 3.* Eigenvalues and number of factors scree plot for the Goals and Perception of School Scale Varimax orthogonal rotation solutions were performed exploring two and three components excluding loadings less than 0.3 (factor loadings  $\geq .3$ ).

Using Cattell's (1966) scree test, it was decided to retain three components for further investigation. As shown in Table 4, there were two problematic items in the three-component solution which were identified as crossloading ("I believe school will be useful to me in the future" and "I intend to go to university or polytechnic"). In particular, the item "I believe school will be useful to me in the future" was found to load across the three components and thus this item was removed. Once this item was removed the rotated solution revealed the presence of a three-component solution with a simple structure (Thurstone, 1947).

As shown in Table 5, the three-component solution shows strong loadings and all items loading substantially on only one component.

Table 4

*Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation of Goals and Perception of School Scale, Three Factor Solution (17 items included)*

Latent Concept	Item Number	Item	Component		
			1 Affect	2 Academic Goals	3 Long-Term Goals
Affect	15	When I am at school, I feel appreciated.	0.83		
	17	I really like being at school.	0.80		
	16	When I am at school, I feel sad.	0.75		
	18	When I am at school, I feel safe.	0.74		
	14	When I am at school, I feel angry.	0.69		
	13	I get bored in days I DON'T go to school.	0.38		
Short-Term Academic Goals	11	I intend to get NCEA Level 3.		0.84	
	8	I intend to finish school.		0.81	
	10	I intend to get NCEA Level 1 only.		0.74	
Long-Term Goals	3	I need to finish school to attain my goals for the future.		0.64	
	4	I believe school will be useful to me in the future.	0.37	0.53	0.30
	5	School DOESN'T fit in my plans for the future.		0.53	
Short-Term Academic Goals	9	Staying at school is better than dropping out.		0.40	
Long-Term Goals	1	I have plans for my future.			0.88
	6	I know what I want in the future.			0.88
Short-Term Academic Goals	12	I intend to go to university or polytechnic.		0.31	0.55
Long-Term Goals	2	I DON'T care about my future.			0.30
% of variance explained			28.30	12.98	11.03

Note. N= 158. Only loadings  $\geq .30$  are displayed.

Following Costello and Osbourne's (2008) recommendation that solid components should show loading items above .5, three items were also eliminated ("I get bored in days I DON'T go to school", "Staying at school is better than dropping out", "I DON'T care about my future"). As shown in Table 5, the GPSS has a final composition of 13 items.

The three-component solution explained a total of 53% of the variance with Component 1 contributing 20%, Component 2 contributing 19% and Component 3 contributing 14%. The interpretation of the three components was consistent with the study's predictions. Items for Component 1, related to participants' perception of their school experience in the emotional domain. This was labelled "School Affect". Items for Component 2 related to participants' intentions of academic achievement in the near future. This was labelled "Short-term Academic Goals". Items for Component 3 related to participants' plans for the long-term future. This was labelled "Long-term goals". Interestingly, after the factor analysis the items "I need to finish school to attain my goals for the future" and "School DOESN'T fit in my plans for the future", which were originally thought to belong to the "Long-term goals" latent concept, loaded strongly in the "Short-term Academic goals" component.

Table 5  
*Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation of the Goals and Perception of School Scale, Three-Component Solution*

Item Number	Subscale and Item	Component		
		1 Affect	2 Academic Goals	3 Long-Term Goals
School Affect				
15	When I am at school, I feel appreciated.	<b>0.83</b>		
17	I really like being at school.	<b>0.80</b>		
16	When I am at school, I feel sad.	<b>0.76</b>		
18	When I am at school, I feel safe.	<b>0.74</b>		
14	When I am at school, I feel angry.	<b>0.69</b>		
13	I get bored in days I DON'T go to school.	0.38		
Short-Term Academic Goals				
11	I intend to get NCEA Level 3.		<b>0.85</b>	
8	I intend to finish school.		<b>0.82</b>	
10	I intend to get NCEA Level 1 only.		<b>0.72</b>	
3	I need to finish school to attain my goals for the future.		<b>0.64</b>	
5	School DOESN'T fit in my plans for the future.		<b>0.54</b>	
9	Staying at school is better than dropping out.		0.39	
Long-Term Goals				
1	I have plans for my future.			<b>0.89</b>
6	I know what I want in the future.			<b>0.89</b>
12	I intend to go to university or polytechnic.			<b>0.54</b>
2	I DON'T care about my future.			0.30
% Variance Explained		20.36	18.70	13.73

Note. N = 158. Only loadings > .30 are displayed. Factor loadings > .50 are in boldface. Item number 4 ("I believe school will be useful to me in the future") was removed prior to this analysis.

The histograms for the three GPSS subscales were construed and examined (see Figure 4, Figure 5, and Figure 6). It was noted that the GPSS Short-Term Academic Goals subscale had a non-normal distribution (see

Figure 5). This was corroborated by the examination of the skewness and kurtosis values for this subscale (see Appendix D). The skewness and kurtosis values were divided by two times their standard error whereby an absolute value higher than two was considered a significant departure from normality. To address the non-normal distribution presented by the Short-Term Academic goals subscale data from this subscale were reflected and transformed using inverse technique. Subsequently, the multiple regression analysis (described below) was conducted. However, it was noted that the overall results (which are explained below) using the transformed items did not change when compared to the results obtained using the raw data. Therefore, I decided to use the raw data for the multiple regression analyses reported in this study.

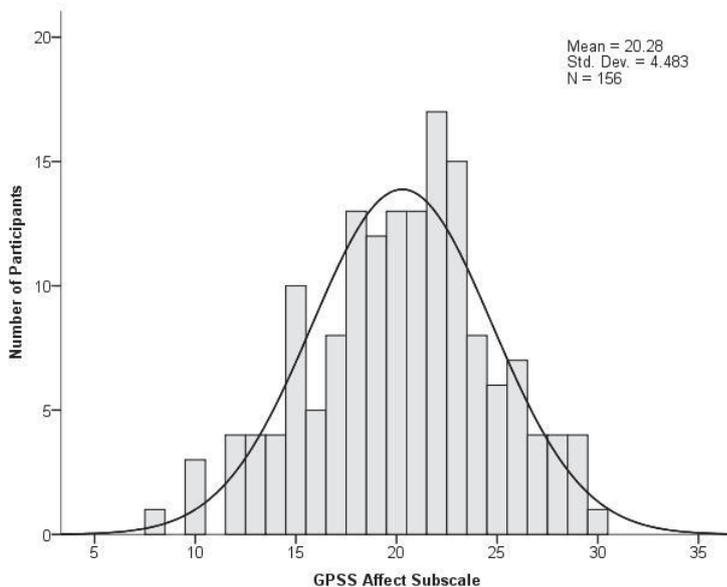


Figure 4. Distribution of the GPSS Affect Subscale scores.

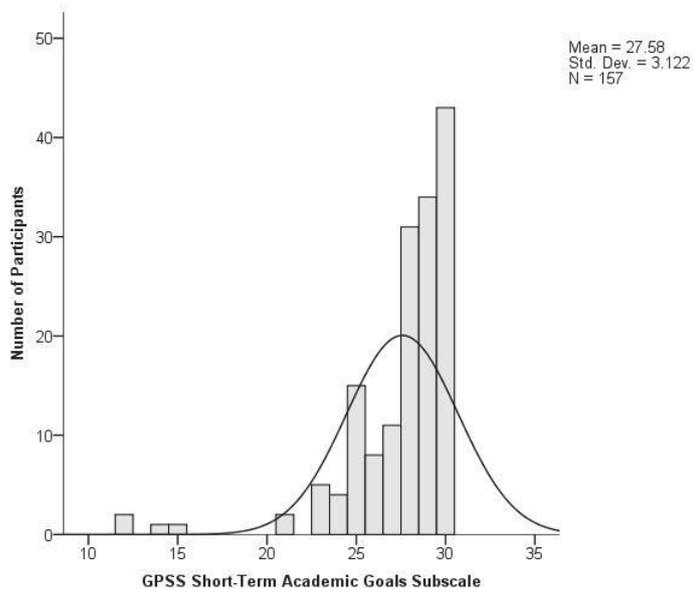


Figure 5. Distribution of the GPSS Short-Term Academic Goals Subscale scores.

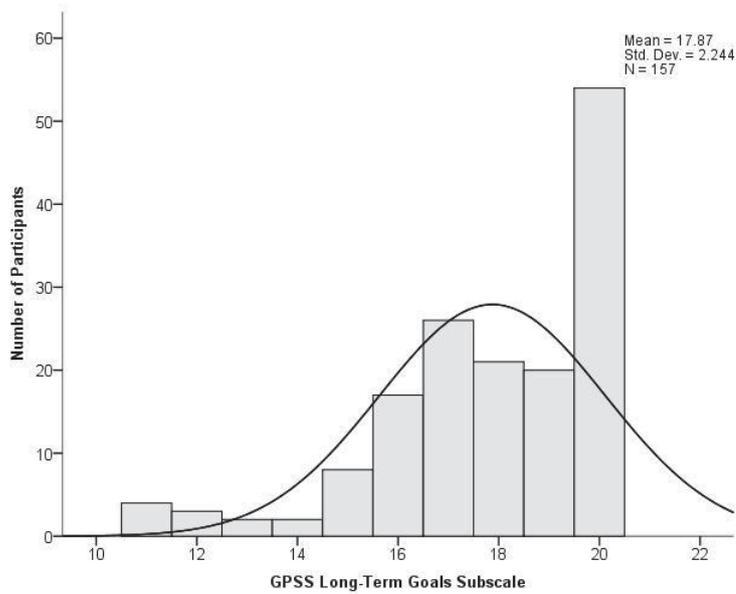


Figure 6. Distribution of the GPSS Long-Term Goals Subscale scores.

According to previous research, the presence and awareness of goals (i.e., short-term and long-term) (Destin & Oyserman, 2010; Paul, Bell, Fitzpatrick, & Smith, 2010) and having positive affect towards school is positively related to school performance (Fredricks et al., 2004; Janosz, Archambault, Morizot, & Pagani, 2008; Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010; Wegner et al., 2008). Therefore, it was expected to find a positive relationship between overall scores of the GPSS and self-reported academic performance. A correlation was calculated between participants' self-reported academic performance and their total score in the GPSS. A significant, weak, positive relationship was found  $r(155) = .19, p = .01$ . This means that in this sample the higher the overall score in the GPSS the more they are likely to report higher academic performance and vice versa.

In order to explore the convergent validity of the GPSS a correlation was calculated between the GPSS and the School Engagement Scale. A significant, strong positive relationship was found,  $r(149) = .63, p < .001$ . This means that in this sample the higher the score in the GPSS the higher the score in the School Engagement Scale and vice versa. The Goals and Perception of School Scale Affect subscale items are similar to those in the School Engagement Scale Affective Subscale. When this relationship was explored a strong positive correlation was found between these subscales  $r(149) = .62, p < .001$ . Thus, it could be argued that the correlation found between the two scales is due to this correlation. Therefore, it was relevant to explore the relationship between the Goals and Perception of School Scale Short-Term Academic and Long-Term subscales with the School Engagement Scale cognitive and behavioural subscales. The analyses revealed a weak positive relationship between the School Engagement Scale Cognitive subscale and the Short-Term Academic Goals  $r(157) = .27, p = .001$  and the Long-Term Goals  $r(156) = .22, p = .005$  subscales.

Archambault and colleagues (2009) reported that out of the School Engagement Scale subscales, the Behavioural subscale was the strongest predictor of drop-out in the sample they studied. In contrast with the School Engagement Scale, the Goals and Perception of School Scale does not ask information about in-school behaviour and lacks a behavioural subscale. As such it was relevant to analyse the relationship between the School Engagement Scale Behavioural subscale

and the Goals and Perception of School Scale subscales. It is important to note that the items of the School Engagement Scale Behavioural subscale have been reversed prior to all the analyses so that lower scores in this subscale indicate misbehaviour and higher scores indicate expected in-school behaviour. The analyses conducted suggested that the School Engagement Scale Behavioural has a moderate significant positive correlation with the Goals and Perception of School Scale Short-Term Academic Goals subscale  $r(154) = .38, p < .001$ . Similarly, there was a weak significant positive correlation with the Goals and Perception of School Scale Affect subscale  $r(153) = .27, p < .001$ . However, there was a non-significant correlation between the GPSS Long-Term Goals subscale and the School Engagement Scale Behavioural subscale  $r(154) = -.026, p = .27$ . Thus, these findings indicate that those who reported higher scores in the Goals and Perception of School Scale Short-Term Academic Goals and Affective subscales were more likely to have lower scores of misbehaviour (i.e., less likely to misbehave) as indicated by the School Engagement Scale Behavioural subscale.

## Discussion

In order to prevent school disengagement it is important to be able to identify it as early as possible so that interventions can be delivered to revoke the disengagement pathway. Thus the purpose of this first study in my research programme was to develop a screening measure to aid the early identification of school disengagement. This measure needed to incorporate the knowledge accumulated in the area of school engagement, school drop-out, and motivation. It has been argued that the presence of positive possible selves creates long-term goals that necessitate short-term goals. Some or all of these short-term goals involve gaining the right skills and qualifications at school. In order to attain the skills and qualifications the students are required to engage with academic subjects even when at first look they might not be intrinsically interesting. Therefore, instead of focusing on the identification of disruptive behaviour or current school performance, the constructs in the developed screening measure focused on identifying the presence of short-term academic goals, long-term goals and school-related affect.

First, it was expected to find that the item pool created actually reflected those three constructs. Secondly, it was expected to find that those participants who were engaged in school would report higher scores in the Goals and Perception of School Scale (higher presence of short-term academic goals and long-term goals as well as higher positive school affect). As expected, it was found that the items of the Goals and Perception of School Scale grouped into the three predicted constructs: short-term academic goals, long-term goals, and school affect. However, some items thought to belong to the long-term future component were found to group in the short-term component. These two items (“School DOESN'T fit in my plans for the future” and “I need to finish school to attain my goals for the future.”) contained the word “school” in them which in itself might have influenced the participants to think about their current conditions instead of thinking about the long-term impact of school in their lives, as was the aim. It is possible that the word “school” acts as a primer to thinking of their immediate experience as high school students. It is interesting that these two items loaded strongly within the short-term future component next to items that directly address

near future deadlines such as attaining the NCEA qualifications. This association might indicate that participants' perception of their near future (e.g., within the next two years) is more salient than their vision of themselves in five or more years' time. Accordingly, the item "I intend to go to university or polytechnic," originally thought to belong to the short-term future component, loaded strongly in the long-term future one. This item was originally thought as a short-term future item because students finishing high school typically face the possibility of continuing in tertiary education. In this sample, nearly half of the participants were one year from finishing high school and so the possibility of going into tertiary education was expected to be perceived as a short-term event. Nevertheless, these findings suggest that participants' short-term future perception is restricted to the current in-school situation, while their perception of the long-term future lies in what happens after high school. It is not clear whether this perception of the short-term and long-term future is intrinsic to such developmental stage and whether it has implications on students' later pursuit of a tertiary education. The students' perception of time with regards to their short and long-term goals is crucial if we want to understand their vision of the future.

In addition, it was found that the total scores of the Goals and Perception of School Scale and the School Engagement Scale correlated strongly and positively, indicating that the Goals and Perception of School Scale is a good indicator of school engagement. Although the Goals and Perception of School Scale does not inquire about participants' in-school behaviour the short-term academic goals subscale relates to the School Engagement Scale behavioural subscale, which was found to be a good predictor of disengagement. Without having to ask about school performance and in-school behaviour the Goals and Perception of School Scale is a measure of school engagement and can be implemented to aid the early identification of those students who are disengaging from school.

This study has some limitations. Because it was advertised only on Facebook, and the inclusion criteria depended on what participants have stated in their Facebook profiles (age, language, enrolled in school), there is the possibility that some of the data reported is not reliable (i.e., participants profile data are subject to social desirability). In addition, as in any other survey

questionnaire, the accuracy of the data depends on the veracity of participants' responses. Furthermore, it was noticeable that males were underrepresented in the sample of this study. In terms of ethnicity, Maori and Pacific People were also underrepresented in this sample. Different studies have shown that school disengagement is more prevalent in boys, and that in New Zealand Māori and Pacific young people are more likely to disengage from school and leave early (Ministry of Social Development, 2010). Therefore, the results from this study cannot be generalised to the overall student population in New Zealand. In fact, the mean of the overall scores was skewed, suggesting that this sample was inclined towards school engagement. It is likely that in a wider sample the distribution will show a wider range of responses. In order to be able to generalise the findings of the Goals and Perception of School Scale, the properties of the scale need to be explored in a wider naturalistic sample approached at school rather than electronically. It would also be interesting to assess the Goals and Perception of School Scale properties with different age cohorts such as those presented in schools (e.g., Year 10, 11, 12, and 13). Given that some of the items in the short-term academic goals subscale are based on the New Zealand school system (e.g., NCEA qualifications) these items not transferable to other school systems with different qualifications. To be used in a different secondary school system the items referring to NCEA qualifications would need to be rephrased in order to make them applicable to their particular context.

Nevertheless, findings from this study emphasise the importance of the relationship between the presence of students' goals (short-term academic goals and long-term goals) and school engagement. Markus and Nurius (1986) had argued that possible selves function as motivators for future behaviour whereby individuals try to approach or avoid them, and evaluate their current context in accordance. Furthermore, having education-related visions of the future and goals was found to increase academic commitment and achievement (Destin & Oyserman, 2010). In Destin and Oyserman's study, participants who reported having education-related goals were found to have a higher school engagement scores. In my study the finding that having short-term academic goals was a predictor of in-school behaviour and school engagement further supports the idea that school engagement is related to the alignment between students' personal goals, possible selves (the

students' vision of themselves in the future) and the outcomes offered by school. That is, school engagement and motivation is more likely to occur when the outcomes offered by school match with what the student expects and hopes to achieve in the future. Therefore, these findings add to the existing evidence, suggesting that school interventions targeting school engagement need to address students' personal goals (e.g., by means of short-term and long-term) and students' visions of themselves in the future (e.g., by means of the exploration of possible selves) in order to pin down the role of school in their lives.

Having done Study 1 which focused on the identification of school disengagement, I proceeded to conduct Study 2. In the following chapters (Chapters 3 to 6) I present Study 2 which aim was to explore the feasibility of a possible selves-based intervention to increase motivation towards school and prevent disengagement.

## CHAPTER 3 : POSSIBLE SELVES WORKSHOP

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### Rationale

What can educators and schools do once they have identified students who are in the school disengagement pathway? How can they best motivate such students? This study is based on the hypotheses that the formulation and balance of possible selves, as well as the acquisition of goal setting strategies, enhances students' affective perception of school and the time and effort they dedicate to school work (Oyserman et al., 2004). That is, when balanced possible selves accompanied with the necessary self-regulatory strategies link the outcomes offered by school (skills and qualifications) to the students' long-term goals, then students' school engagement increases. According to this argument, an intervention that leads to possible selves awareness, balance, and self-regulatory strategies is expected to result in improved school engagement (Hock et al., 2009).

However, in many of the publications that report the effect of possible selves-based interventions, there is little information about the actual content and delivery of the possible selves based intervention, making it difficult to replicate the findings. Hock, Deshler, and Schumaker (2009) are unique in describing the actual activities they used with the young people. In the possible selves programme they focused on the construction of the Possible Selves Tree. Through that activity the participants explored their strengths, weaknesses, identity, goals, and fears. In their study, Hock and colleagues facilitated (as teachers) a reflection on how to make the tree grow by means of a discussion of how to achieve the goals identified in the Possible Selves Tree.

To address the above mentioned hypotheses in this study a possible selves based intervention was adapted and delivered to answer two questions. First it was necessary to explore whether the proposed intervention was effective in improving participants' possible selves in terms of number and balance of academic possible selves as well as the quality of the strategies as measured by the *Next Year Possible Selves* questionnaire (Oyserman et al., 2004). A pre, post, and follow-up analysis using repeated measures analysis of variance was used to explore significant

change in the dependent variables derived from the possible selves measure across three points in time.

Second it was relevant to explore whether the dependent variables of school engagement, self-efficacy, academic performance, time spent studying, and mood would change after the intervention. A pre, post, and follow-up analysis using repeated measures analysis of variance was also used to explore significant change in these dependent variables across three points in time.

The Possible Selves Tree activity created by Hock and colleagues was adapted. The adaptations included the addition of a psycho-education, explicit goal setting and problem-solving skills components (see Appendix AA for the intervention manual). Unlike the activity delivered by Hock and colleagues, the intervention developed in this study has been grounded on strengths-based principles and was delivered in a group format, by a facilitator previously unknown to the students and independent from the students' school. Thus, at baseline there was neutral relationship with the young people involved and no previous history of disciplinary enforcement. This was considered an important factor to aid in the rapport building and honesty to which participants can disclose true feelings about how school fits in their visions of the future, and how much support they actually perceive from school.

Given that having the necessary goal setting strategies (Oyserman et al., 2004) has been found to be crucial on the impact that possible selves exploration has on school performance, a specific goal setting training component was incorporated in the developing of this intervention (see Figure 7). While Hock and colleagues' goal setting component is only worked through the Possible Selves Tree, in this intervention this component is further developed to other examples. This is followed by psycho-education about how the visions of the future can aid their current decision making as well as about the rewards' bias found during adolescent development and the effect of human immediate reward bias.

There appears to be an underlying assumption that academic goal attainment depends on goal setting and goal achievement and it is isolated from the emotional and social context of the adolescent. Is it really possible for adolescents to successfully achieve when they are going through

challenging emotional experiences? Typical adolescents go through emotional challenging experiences such as breakups, fallouts with friends, non-normative peer influences, family stresses, death of a significant other, and health issues. Fortin and colleagues (2006) found that adolescents who are at-risk of dropping out experience significantly more symptoms of depression than those who are not at risk. As such, the intervention conducted in this research incorporated problem-solving skills and a self-care component. In addition, the importance of seeking help and accessing support was also emphasised as part of self-care strategies provided. The aim of incorporating self-care and help-seeking was to acknowledge the impact of the emotional world on students and their ability to cope with the academic demands of school, facilitate awareness of the resources available to students in the different systems (family, school community), as well as the importance of monitoring their needs, and utilising their resources accordingly.

The Possible Selves Workshop intervention had the aim of being suitable to mainstream<sup>7</sup> schools. By the age of 16 students in New Zealand can legally work and as such it is at this age that most early leavers stop studying. It has been argued that the process of disengagement precedes the time in which the actual decision of leaving school takes place. Therefore, an effective intervention targeting motivation to continue school needs to target students younger than 16 years. As such, the age targeted in this intervention was 14 and 15 years, which corresponds to students enrolled in Year 10.

According to Rose (1998), better group work (i.e., in the group therapy context) is attained when the number of participants in the group is more than three and less or equal to eight. Taking this finding into consideration, this intervention was planned to be delivered to groups of seven participants. However, the number of participants per group was also adapted to fit the particular needs of the participating schools.

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<sup>7</sup> In New Zealand mainstream schools are those not identified as special education providers and include state funded and state-integrated funded schools.



Figure 7. Intervention's components and proposed pathway.

## Method

### Procedure

During the developmental stage, the possible selves tree activity was informally conducted with 10 young people (ages 16 to 19 years) who were previously known to me and volunteered to participate and provide feedback. As such the instructions for the activity were refined and the amount of time to complete it was estimated.

Given that this particular type of intervention has never been implemented in New Zealand it was important to first explore its suitability within this context. At this stage, the purpose was not to identify cause of change as a result of the intervention. Therefore, a pre post test design without a control group was selected for the purpose of assessing the effect of the intervention based on within-subjects comparisons (see Figure 9).

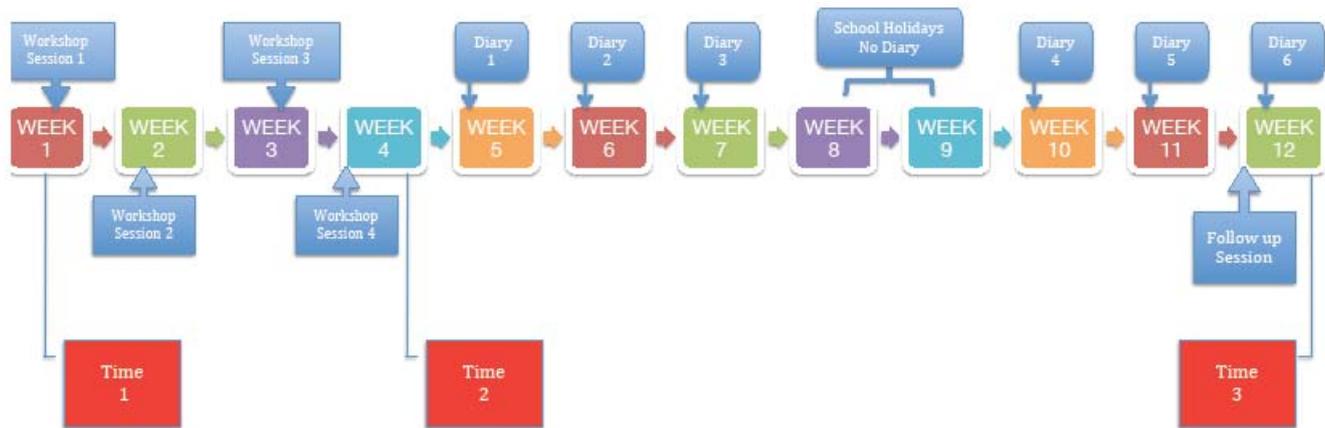


Figure 8. Timeline of the Possible Selves Workshop study.

The number of participants per intervention group was based on (Rose, 1998) recommendations for group interventions with adolescents. In terms of the student population, there are two types of mainstream schools within the New Zealand context, single-sex and mixed. For the purpose of addressing the feasibility and suitability of the intervention it was relevant that single-sex and mixed type was represented in this study. Therefore, the sample of this study comes from boys-only, girls-only and a mixed high school.

In the three participating schools I met with the Year 10 students during assembly, in which I was provided with 10-15 minutes to briefly present the project to the students. During this brief presentation I introduced myself, and explained to them the content (i.e., find out about their long term goals, what they want and don't want for their future, as well as how to attain those goals) and

nature of the workshop (i.e., one hour long weekly sessions during four consecutive weeks, and a follow-up session two months later). I explained they would be asked to keep a brief diary during six weeks. I also explained to them that in appreciation for their time and effort they would receive a total of NZ\$80 in the form of two \$40 pre-paid gift cards. Finally, I described the recruitment method and distributed the information sheet and consent forms (see Appendix E, Appendix F, Appendix G, and Appendix H).

Settings 1 and 3 were contacted first and in these settings the students were asked to hand in the signed consent forms (i.e., individual and parent or guardian) as soon as possible to the appointed school staff (i.e., the receptionist, dean, or school counsellor) as only the first seven would be selected to participate in the workshop (i.e., the selection criterion was first come, first served). In addition, a wait list was created with the next three interested students in case of early drop out. However, in these settings there was no need to utilise the wait list. The school staff from Setting 1 pointed out that this recruitment method (i.e., first come, first served) provided a clear advantage for those students who are organised, reliable, committed and, in general, motivated. While many of the students invited had expressed interest in participating in the workshop and had returned the consent forms signed the first seven students were, in their opinion, not necessarily those that need it more. While it was too late to change the recruitment criterion in these two settings it was decided to change the criterion in the case of Setting 2.

In Setting 2, participants were given a whole day to return the consent forms signed. The returns were numbered and then seven numbers were randomly selected out of the pool. In the dean's opinion this group represented a fair sample of their students. However, the dean and the principal contacted me to explore the possibility of expanding the group from seven to ten, as they thought there were three more students in the return's pool that could greatly benefit from taking part in the workshop. Taking into account the costs involved in taking three more participants (i.e., appreciation for participation was in total \$80 per participant), this setting (i.e., the school) offered to sponsor the extra three students. While I agreed to take the three extra students, I declined their

offer to sponsor the extra participants as I was able to access additional university research funding to cover for the extra costs. Therefore, Setting 2 was composed of ten participants.

In appreciation for their participation (i.e., time and effort) in this study, participants received two payments; the first payment delivered once the fourth workshop session was completed (i.e., \$40 in the form of a pre-paid gift card) and the second payment was delivered once the participants completed the 2-month follow-up measures (i.e., an additional \$40 also in the form of a pre-paid gift card). Along with the second payment participants also received a certificate of attendance (see Appendix T).

Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. Following the best practice recommendations from the Code of Ethics for Psychologists Working in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the limits of confidentiality were clearly stated to the participants verbally (e.g., when they were invited to participate and during the first session of the workshop), and I liaised with the school counsellor (i.e., or equivalent staff member) to ensure that participants could receive the appropriate support services if needed. Written parental consent was compulsory for their participation in the study.

## **Participants**

This study was conducted after the full approval of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee was obtained (Southern A, Application 11/30). Five mainstream schools were contacted initially by phone call and invited to participate. Upon expression of interest the phone call was followed by an email which presented the research project. Three schools accepted the invitation. The intervention was offered as an after school-workshop. However, the time of workshop delivery was adapted to the particular needs of the participating schools. Setting 1 consisted of a single-sex girls' only school; Setting 2 consisted of a single-sex boys' only school; and Setting 3 consisted of a mixed-sex coeducational school. In the three settings I attended an assembly and approached all Year 10 students by means of a brief presentation of the research project and invited them to participate. The information sheets and consent forms were distributed to those who expressed interest (the information sheets and consent forms are presented in Appendix E to H). In Setting 1, those who

participated represented 23% of the sample approached. In Setting 2 and 3 participants represented 10% and 9% of the sample approached respectively. The participants who self-selected to take part in the study were 24 adolescents (13 boys and 11 girls): seven girls from Setting 1, 10 boys from Setting 2, and four girls and three boys from Setting 3.

All the participants were proficient in English and enrolled in Year 10; the mean age was 14.25 ( $SD = .44$ ) with a range from 14 to 15 years. The ethnic composition of Setting 1 consisted of two participants who self-identified as European New Zealanders, two self-identified as Pacific Peoples, one self-identified as Middle Eastern, and two did not report their ethnicity. The ethnic compositions of Setting 2 consisted of three participants who self-identified as European, two self-identified as Pacific Peoples, and five did not report their ethnicity. The ethnic composition of Setting 3 consisted of five participants who self-identified as European, one self-identified as Māori, and one who did not report ethnicity. The decile rating of the schools (i.e., an indicator of the proportion of students from low socio-economic communities whereby a decile 1 school has the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities and a decile 10 school the lowest proportion of these students) was 6 for Setting 1, 5 for Setting 2, and 9 for Setting 3.

## Measures

In order to explore and evaluate the effect of the intervention delivered, the following measures were utilised.

To measure school engagement I used the measures previously described in Study 1. The first measure was the *School Engagement Scale [SES]* (Archambault et al., 2009) which is a 15 self-report written scale, developed to explore school engagement across three different domains: affective, behavioural and cognitive (Appendix J shows this measure as it was presented to the participants). Examples of the items are “I disrupted the class on purpose”; “I am happy when the work is quite challenging”; and “I spend much time in mathematics” Responses were provided in a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*quite often*). The authors have reported good reliability for this scale (behavioural subscale  $\alpha = .65$ , affective subscale  $\alpha = .83$ , and cognitive

subscale  $\alpha = .88$ ). Good reliability was also found for this scale in Study 1 (total scale  $\alpha = .83$ ). In addition, this scale has been reported as a good predictor of drop out ( $\beta = -0.15, p < 0.001$ ) (Archambault et al., 2009).

The *Goals and Perception of School Scale (GPSS)* was developed in Study 1 of this research to explore the relationship between the students' long-term plans, the students' short-term academic goals and the students' school affect (Appendix K shows this measure as it was presented to the participants). The scale consists of 13 self-report items such as "I have plans for my future", "When I am at school I feel sad" and "I intend to attain NCEA Level 3". Likert-scale responses range from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The scale had good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .83$ ) and convergent validity with the SES ( $r(149) = .63, p < .001$ ).

The *Children's Perceived Self Efficacy scale (CPSE)* was developed by Bandura (1990, 2006) to explore children's or young people's beliefs in their capability to produce given attainments. All items ask the young person to rate their confidence in a scale from 0 (*cannot do at all*) to 100 (*highly certain can do*). Three subscales were used in this study (Appendix L shows this measure as it was presented to the participants): The Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources subscale contains four items (e.g., confidence to "Get teachers to help me when I get stuck on schoolwork"); The Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement subscale contains nine items (e.g., confidence to "Learn general mathematics"); and The Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning contains 10 items (e.g., confidence to "Finish my homework assignments by deadlines"). The different subscales have been found to have good psychometric properties (Pastorelli et al., 2001).

The *Self-report Performance in Maths and English Assignments* was used as an indicator of a participants' academic performance (Appendix K shows this measure as it was presented to the participants). Math and English are compulsory to all Year 10 students thus were considered a common performance indicator. In addition, a specified number of Math and English credits are compulsory for university entrance upon attainment of NCEA level 3. Thus, it was considered important to ask information about participants' performance in these subjects as it is related to a possible education-related future. Two questions were presented to the participants: "What is the

most common grade you get for your Maths assignments?”, and “What is the most common grade you get for your English assignments?” Participants then were required to select one of four possible answers: 1 (*No Credit*); 2 (*Credit*); 3 (*Merit*); and 4 (*Excellence*).

The *Next Year Possible Selves (NYPS)* was developed by Oyserman (2004). In this self-report open-ended questionnaire participants are asked to identify expectations and concerns for their future (i.e., next year) and describe strategies to attain or avoid such expectations or concerns. An example of an item about the expectations for the future is “Next year I expect to be ...”, and an example of an item about concerns for the future is “Next year I want to avoid being/doing ...” (Appendix I shows this measure as it was presented to the participants). The responses of this questionnaire are coded by more than one rater following the coding instructions developed by Oyserman who reported a 94% inter-rater reliability for the coding of this measure (2004).

In the present study, two postgraduate psychology students who were blind to the hypothesis rated the participants’ responses to the Next Year Possible Selves questionnaire independently following Oyserman’s coding instructions. The relationship between the raters’ coding was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and the single measure intra-class correlation coefficient (i.e., two-way random effect model, absolute agreement type). As shown in Table 6, there was a strong positive correlation between the two ratings for the four variables coded at Time 1 (i.e.,  $n = 23$ ), Time 2 (i.e.,  $n = 23$ ) and Time 3 ( $n = 18$ ). Also shown in Table 6, the analysis revealed moderate inter-rater reliability. The inter-rater reliability tended to be lower in the coding of Balance (i.e., ICC varied from .60 to .67). In addition, the inter-rater reliability tended to be lower at Time 3 for the coding of the Strategies for Academic Expected Possible Selves, Plausibility, and Balance variables (i.e., ICC varied from .45 to .64). All the analyses conducted on the NYPS variables were done using the ratings provided by the independent raters.

Table 6  
Inter-rater reliability analysis of the Next Year Possible Selves variables.

Variable			Time	<i>R</i>	<i>ICC</i>
Academic Selves	Expected	Possible	1	0.98*	0.96*
			2	0.81*	0.79*
			3	0.83*	0.79*
Strategies for Academic Possible Selves	Expected	Possible	1	0.83*	0.69*
			2	0.77*	0.73*
			3	0.75*	0.45*
Plausibility			1	0.89*	0.78*
			2	0.73*	0.73*
			3	0.63*	0.64*
Balance			1	0.79*	0.67*
			2	0.62*	0.62*

Using the Next Year Possible Selves measure and its coding instructions, four variables were coded and analysed in this study: Academic Expected Possible Selves, Strategies for Academic Expected Possible Selves, Plausibility, and Balance. Academic Expected possible selves refer to participants' desired possible self that is related to an academic outcome (e.g., "next year I expect to be in Year 11"). The Strategies for Academic Expected possible selves refer to the strategies that participants identified and enlisted as necessary to achieve their academic desired possible selves (e.g., trying to work hard in class and asking questions). The variable Plausibility refers to the degree that the strategies enlisted are useful in creating a *road map* to achieving in school. As such, higher level of plausibility is given when there are multiple academic possible selves enlisted and are accompanied by strategies focusing on academic (e.g., "managing my assignments better using my diary and reminders") and interpersonal (e.g., "don't talk back as much and listen to what teachers have to say") aspects that contribute towards the academic visions. The variable balance refers to whether each Expected Academic possible selves were matched by a feared Academic possible self (e.g., "next year I expect to attain NCEA 1 and avoid failing in school).

Fortin and colleagues (2006) found different levels of depression symptoms in those participants who dropped out, which differentiated them significantly from the control group suggesting a relationship between depression and drop-out. Hence, it was relevant in this study to have a measure of mood. In addition, Destin and Oyserman (2010) found that changes in possible selves increased students' time and effort spent studying or doing homework. Thus, for this study it was considered important to track participants' homework and study time. Therefore, in addition to the written questionnaires, participants were instructed to keep a self-report measure in the form of a fill-in-the-blank diary that had the aim to track their daily description of the school experience, their mood, and the time they spent studying or doing homework. Participants completed the *Four-Line Diary* for six weeks, during which time it was sent to me weekly, starting on the week after the last workshop session (Week 5 see Figure 8). Participants filled in the diary weekly for every working day (i.e., they were not required to fill in the diary on Saturday, Sunday or Public Holiday) during six weeks over an eight week period (i.e., there were two weeks of school holidays between Week 8 and Week 9 in which they were asked to suspend the diary completion).

The *Four-Line Diary* consisted of four items (Appendix M shows the "Four lines diary" template used by the participants in this study). In the first and second line the participant is asked to fill in the blank to the sentences "Today school was ..." "Today I felt ...". In the third line the participant is asked to rate her/his overall mood during the day in a scale that ranged from 1 (*the worst I have ever felt*) to 10 (*the best I have ever felt*). In the fourth line the participant is asked to fill in the blank to the sentence "I have spent ... hours doing homework/studying today". For each participant an average mood rating and study time was calculated per week.

In order to ensure confidentiality regarding the content of the diary participants were provided with stamped envelopes so they could post it to me each week at their convenience. The statistical analysis of the diary data only considered those participants who completed the dairies from Week 5 to Week 12 (see Figure 8). Therefore, the six weeks included the last three weeks of the third term, and the first three weeks of the fourth term, divided by two weeks of school holidays. Week 10 and 12 included end of year exams.

## The possible selves workshop

Participants in each setting attended 4 weekly-sessions of 60 minutes each. The intervention took place at their school and was delivered by me. I wrote detailed notes after each intervention session. The notes included information about process and content of the sessions. In Settings 1 and 2 the workshop took place after school (i.e., 15:30 to 16:30). In Setting 3, the workshop took place during the students' lunch break (i.e., 12:20 to 13:20) to be able to accommodate to this setting needs. Two months later, I met with the participants one more time in those same conditions to collect the follow-up measures (see Figure 8).

Some components of the Possible Selves Programme developed by Hock and colleagues (Hock et al., 2009) were incorporated to the Possible Selves Workshop. However, there were important variations in the way the Discovery, Thinking, Sketching, and Growing components were delivered in this study. In addition, new components were introduced. As shown in the intervention manual (see Appendix AA), the Possible Selves Workshop consisted of four sessions. In Session one, I introduced myself and explained the workshop's aim, the structure of the sessions, the time line of the workshop and diary as well as the limits of confidentiality. I then proceeded to the formulation of the group's ground rules, the exploration of participants' reasons to participate, and outcome expectations from the workshop. The order in which the following activities were presented varied across settings. However, in the three settings all participants were asked to fill in the questionnaires for the first time (Time 1). This was followed by the first activity called "sausages"<sup>8</sup>. In this activity participants were first asked to talk to other group members about their strengths, interest, hobbies, skills and difficulties, and then they were asked to write down in their manuals what they have identified. From the first session on, all the sessions were opened by eliciting questions or reflections about the previous session, and by inviting them to add new rules to the ground rules if

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<sup>8</sup> The name of this activity makes reference to the way turns are taken. Like sizzling sausages that are turned from one side to the next to even up the heat, participants take turns talking by placing their hands palms up or down (see intervention manual for a detailed description).

they felt the need for it. It was also an opportunity for me to go back to unfinished activities and keep them on track.

In Session 2 I briefly explained the concept of identity using self-disclosure to provide examples of the different components of my identity. Then, participants were asked to complete the “Exploring identity” activity in their manuals. In this activity they were asked to explore three components of their identity (e.g., person, student or learner, in the area of strength) by asking them to describe themselves and think of what they hope, expect and fear to become in these areas. Then, participants are asked to integrate the information and reflections about their identity by sketching the Possible Selves Tree (see Appendix W). In this activity participants were asked to draw a tree which roots represent their qualities and values (e.g. loyal), the branches represent areas of their identity previously explored (e.g. as a person, student/learner, worker/area of strength). The smaller branches that make up the foliage represent the small steps or actions they have taken or can take to make the big branch grow thicker. Participants were also asked to incorporate in the drawing elements that jeopardise the tree (e.g. termites or poison in the soil) to represent their fears. Finally, participants were asked to draw the elements that nurture or protect the tree (e.g., water, or sun) to represent sources of support they have in their lives. Throughout this activity I went around talking to each participant about the content of their sketch to make sure they had understood the instructions.

In Session 3, participants were given written feedback from their Possible Selves Tree. The feedback consisted of pointing out to them areas in which they could be more specific or reminding them of elements they had failed to include, and they were given time to incorporate the feedback. I also followed up the written feedback given by going around and talking to each participant about it.

Subsequently, I engaged the participants in a brainstorm about what they wanted and didn't want for their future (i.e., long-term goals). Working together as a group I asked them to identify the short-term goals needed to achieve their long-term goals. Then participants were asked to complete the goal setting activity “How do I get there?” in their manual. In the goal setting activity they were asked to choose a long-term goal to break into short term goals and then break further into small

steps. Each participant created an action plan based on their long-term and short-term goals. I spent one-on-one time with each participant to guide them through the goal setting process.

This was followed by the introduction of the self-care concept and a discussion about its relationship to the ability to persevere whilst in a goal pursuit. Participants brainstormed what they do to look after themselves and they identified what they find rewarding (e.g., social networking, playing video games, going to the beach, etc.). At this point the link between rewards (i.e., immediate and delayed) and motivation was discussed. For Setting 1, the session ended with a three minute relaxation exercise as described in their manual. For Setting 2 and 3 there was not enough time to introduce the relaxation exercise.

In Session 4, the participants were provided with the “Four-Line diary” package to be recorded during the following weeks. In setting 1 and 2, I took the opportunity to acknowledge and briefly reflect on the termination of the workshop. In all of the settings I recapped on the goal setting activity from the previous session and, working together as a group, I elicited a brainstorm to create an action plan with a short-term goal example: “an upcoming maths test”. At this point problem solving skills were elicited. The participants were asked to identify the steps to be taken and the strategies to be put in place. Participants were also asked to reflect on the obstacles they thought they could find while trying to follow their action plan (Health, 2008) and to reflect on how to overcome those obstacles. This was followed by encouragement of help-seeking behaviour by means of a discussion about the different resources they can utilise (e.g., at home, school, and the community). In addition, participants received information and brochures about organisations in the community that support young people as included in the manual (e.g., Youthline). At the end of this session, the participants were given the printed diary to fill in, the necessary instructions for filling in the diaries and the dates for the follow-up session. Finally, the participants filled in the questionnaires for the second time (Time 2) and I gave them their first honorarium payment.

## **The follow-up**

The follow-up session occurred eight weeks after the last workshop session. It was held at the same time and place the workshop had occurred for each setting. To try to ensure attendance to this session I emailed and called the participants on the phone the week before to remind them of the session's date and time. Not all of the participants were able to be contacted. For all of the settings the End-of-Year examinations have taken place in the weeks prior to this session.

The structure of this session was similar across settings. To this session a research assistant accompanied me to be responsible of distributing and collecting participants' feedback. First, I introduced the research assistance to the groups. Then, greetings and a brief recap of the content of the workshop were done, followed by an explanation of the agenda for the session. As with the workshop sessions, food and snacks were also provided in this session at this point. I proceeded by complimenting their hard work during the workshop and thanked them for their participation. Participants answered the questionnaires for the third time (Time 3). I stayed in the room to make sure there were no questions about it. Once they had all finished I said goodbye and exited the room. At this point the research assistant distributed the feedback forms along with their certificates of attendance, their honorarium payment, and an individualised letter written by me (see Appendix U). Participants left at their own time as they finished filling in the participation feedback form.

## Results

The results of the Possible Selves Workshop will be reviewed in three ways: (a) the quantitative scores, (b) the qualitative observations and subjective impressions from the participants, and (c) some illustrative case studies.

This first section presents the analyses conducted on the different measures taken in this study. To be able to present these results in a logical manner, the different analyses were grouped in sub-sections according to their nature. That is, descriptive statistics and reliability analysis of the different measures used, followed by the analysis of the sample in terms of attrition, gender, and the comparison between the participants' responses at Time 1, 2 and 3. Subsequently, the continuous measures diary study time and mood rating are also analysed.

An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical analysis conducted in this study unless otherwise indicated. The descriptive statistics and analysis were calculated using SPSS 17. Throughout this study the criteria for approaching missing data was to exclude cases pairwise (i.e., when conducting correlations) and exclude cases analysis by analysis (i.e., when conducting analysis of variance).

## **Descriptive Statistics**

This section presents the descriptive statistics of the data derived from the different measures used in this study. This section has been subdivided according to the type of information obtained from the measures: school engagement and self-efficacy, self-reported grades, possible selves, mood-rating, and study time. Before exploring the effect of the intervention on the different dependent variables it was important to assess the internal consistency of the scales, the distribution of the data, and the relationships between the different variables. Moreover, it was relevant to examine gender differences across the variables and whether the scores of the participants who completed the measures at Time1, Time 2 and Time 3, were different from those of the participants who failed to attend the follow-up session and did not complete the measures at Time 3.

### **School engagement and self-efficacy**

Prior to the analyses of the scales the negatively worded items in the SES and GPSS were reversed. The reliability analyses conducted revealed good internal consistency across the scales used in this study. The internal consistency analysis for the School Engagement Scale (SES), Goals and Perception of School Scale (GPSS), and Children's Perceived Self-Efficacy (CPSE) at Time 1 revealed Cronbach alpha coefficients of .92, .90, and .91 respectively. Good internal consistency was maintained at Time 2 (SES  $\alpha = .92$ ; GPSS  $\alpha = .91$ , and CPSE  $\alpha = .92$ ), and Time 3 (SES  $\alpha = .91$ ; GPSS  $\alpha = .88$ , and CPSE  $\alpha = .84$ ) for all the scales.

The histograms were constructed and examined to assess the distribution of the data. Additionally, skewness and kurtosis values were divided by two times their standard error and absolute values higher than two were considered a significant departure from normality (Brown, 1997). This criterion was used consistently throughout this study to assess normality. Overall the dependent variables SES, GPSS, and CPSE total scores were found to be normally distributed (see Figure 9). Appendix O presents tables with the means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis values and Chronbach alpha coefficients for the items, and total scale scores.

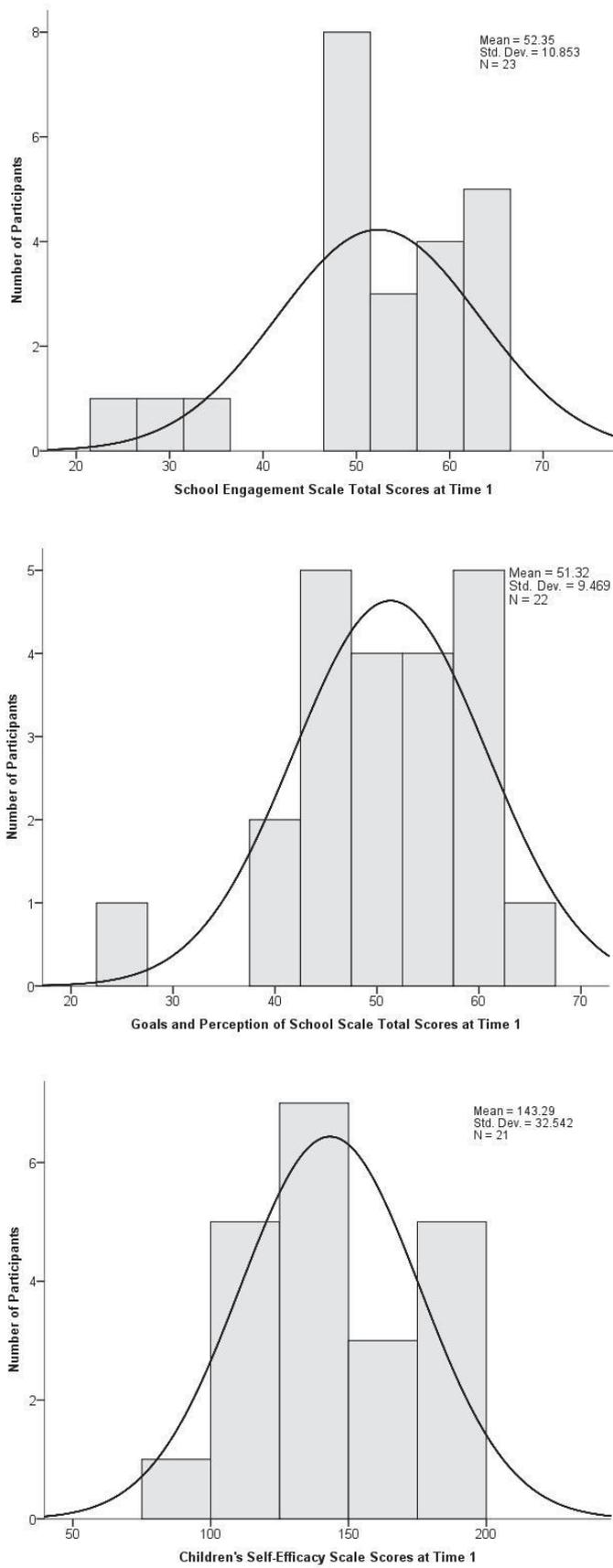


Figure 9. Distribution of the SES GPSS CSES scores at Time 1

## Maths and English

Participants reported their most recent performance in Maths and English assignments. Following the criteria described in the previous section, the assessment of the distribution of the data revealed that the self-reported performance in Maths and English assignments was normally distributed (see Figure 10). Appendix P shows a table with the means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis values for self-reported performance in Maths and English assignments.

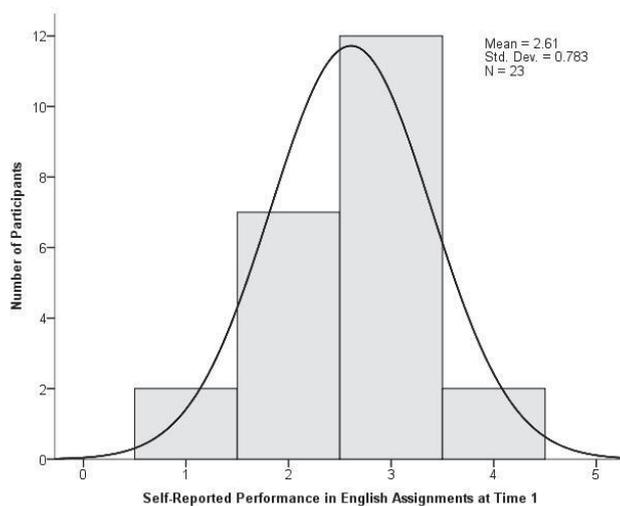
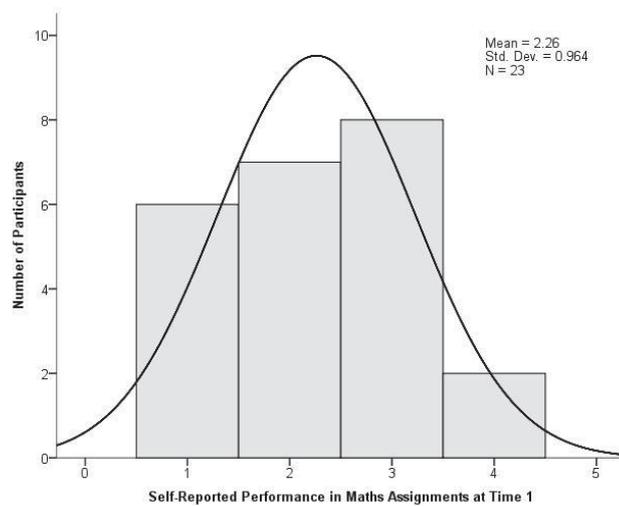


Figure 10. Distribution of the self-reported performance in Maths and English assignments at Time 1.

### **Possible selves measure**

Participants were presented with the NYPS, an open-ended questionnaire about their expected and feared possible selves for the next year (see Appendix I). Participants' responses in the NYPS were coded by the researcher and two independent raters. Four variables were coded and analysed in this study: Academic Expected Possible Selves (e.g., "passing NCEA 1"), Strategies for Academic Expected Possible Selves (e.g., "going to classes"), Plausibility (e.g., the plausibility level given is higher when there are multiple academic goals and the strategies guide behaviour towards them: writing homework in my diary, using reminders in my phone, sitting away from friends, and asking the teacher when I don't understand" ), and Balance (e.g., "next year I expect getting better grades and avoid failing"). Using the same criteria previously described for the assessment of normality. It was noted that at Time 1, participants' responses were slightly skewed towards the left whereby a considerable number of participants had scores of zero for the four NYPS variables (see Figure 11). However, this result was expected as at Time 1 the intervention had not taken place and participants' possible selves have not been explored. Appendix Q shows the means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis values for the variables measured by the NYPS. In spite of the observations drawn from the histograms, the analysis of the skewness and kurtosis revealed a normal distribution for each of the NYPS variables.

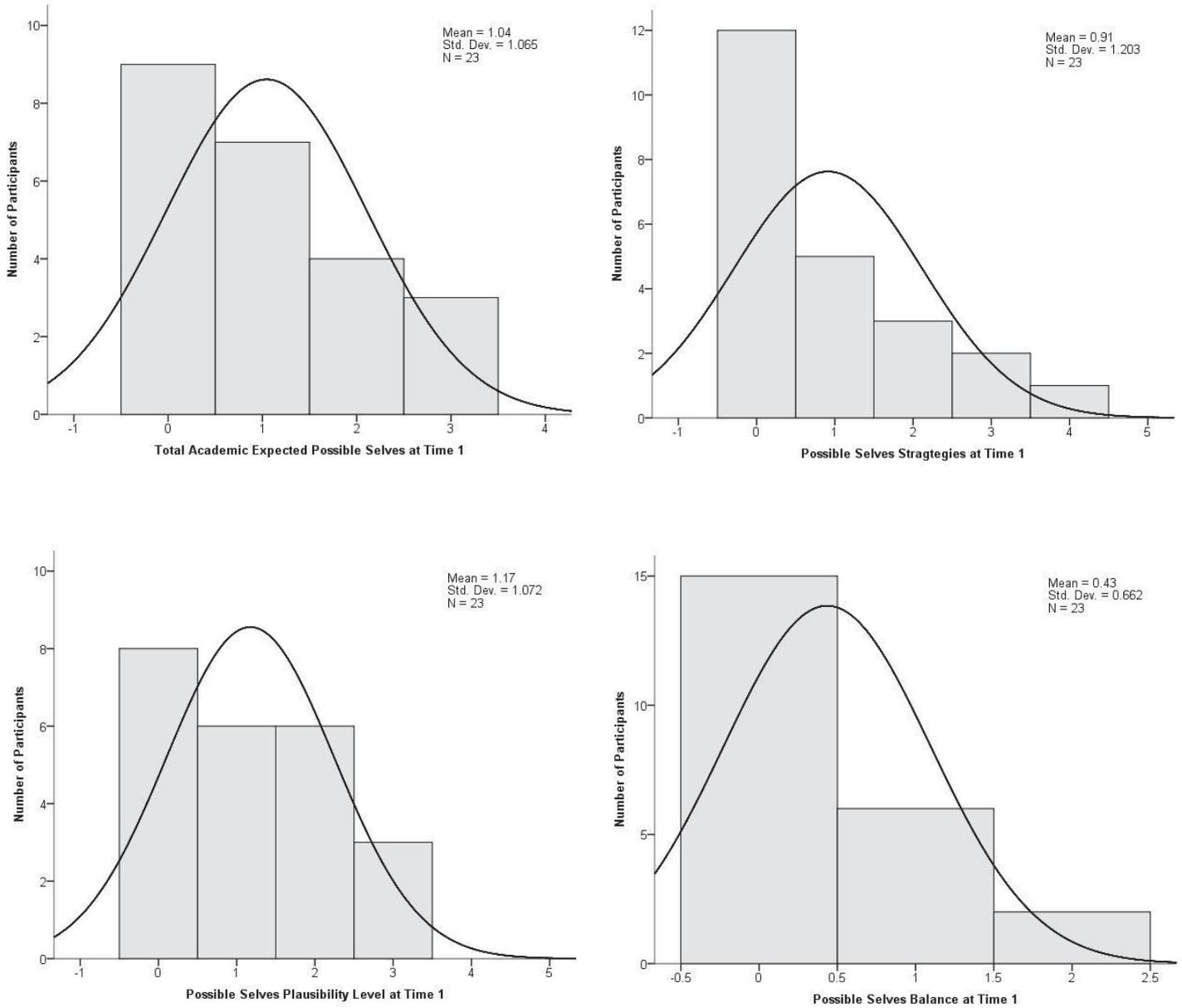


Figure 11. Distribution of the Next Year Possible Selves variables at Time 1.

### Diary mood rating and study-time

In their diaries, participants reported their mood and the amount of time per day they spent studying or doing homework every working day for six weeks (i.e., Monday to Friday with the exception of Saturday, Sunday, and school or public holidays). Using these data, the average mood rating and

study-time (in minutes) per week per participant was calculated. The missing data criterion was to exclude cases analysis by analysis. That is, the analysis included all the cases that had valid data. Using the same criteria previously described for the assessment of normality, the analysis of these data revealed a normal distribution for the mood rating and the study-time variables (see Figure 12). Appendix R shows the study time mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis values per group per week.

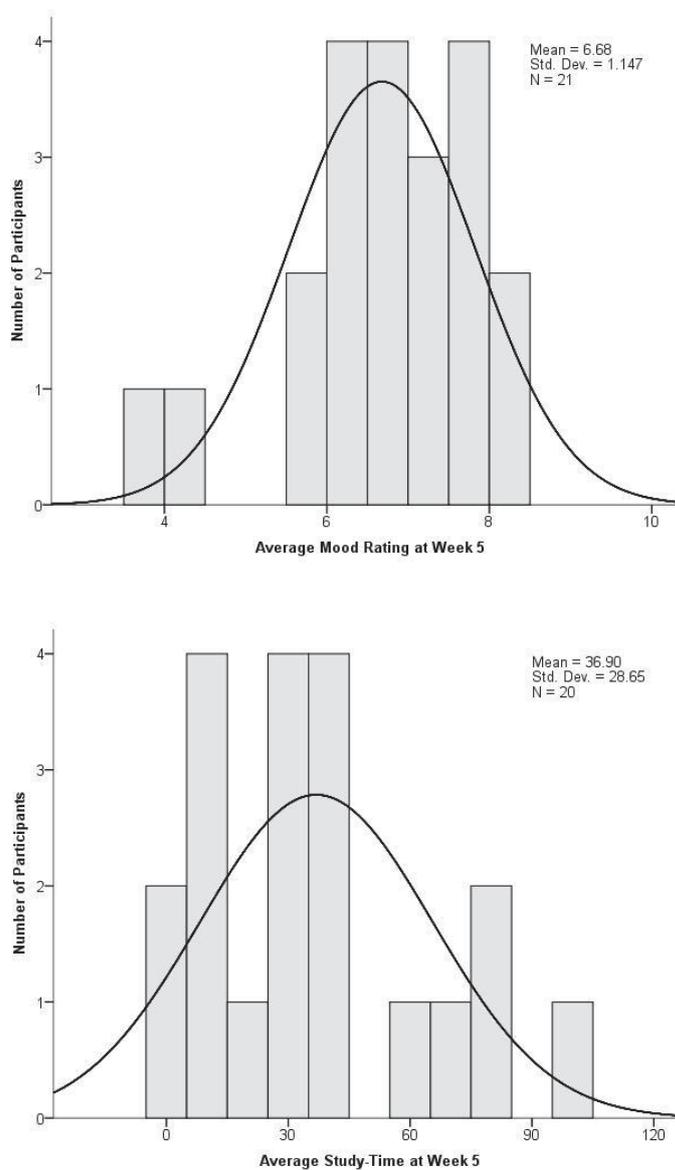


Figure 12. Distribution of the average Mood Rating and Study-Time reported in the diaries during Week 5.

## Gender

Using the overall sample that completed the measures at Time 1 ( $N = 23$ ), the differences between gender were explored. A one-way between groups multivariate analysis of variance was conducted using gender as the independent variable and the measures of school engagement (i.e., SES, and GPSS), self-efficacy (i.e., CPSE), Maths and English self-reported performance as the dependent variables. The analysis revealed no differences between males and females on the combined dependent variables Wilk's Lambda = .53,  $F(5, 14) = 2.49$ ,  $p = .08$ .

Additionally, a one-way between groups analysis of variance was conducted using gender as the independent variable and the NYPS measures as the dependent variables. There was a statistically significant difference between males and females on the combined dependent variables Wilk's Lambda = .48,  $F(4, 18) = 4.77$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $\eta^2 = .88$ . When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, all the variables examined reached statistical significance: Total Academic Expected Possible Selves  $F(1) = 21.59$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .51$ , Strategies  $F(1) = 7.57$ ,  $p = .012$ ,  $\eta^2 = .26$ , Plausibility  $F(1) = 11$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\eta^2 = .34$ , and Balance  $F(1) = 4.83$ ,  $p = .039$ ,  $\eta^2 = .18$ . The analysis of the means indicated that for all these variables the mean of males was significantly lower than the mean of females (see Table 7). Taking into account that there were differences in the recruitment methods across settings, the differences between genders were thought to be better explained by the differences in the recruitment strategies used. While in Setting 1 the girls-only school those who participated in the workshop were identified as already motivated and performing well by the school staff, in Setting 2 a boys-only school the recruitment allowed for a wide variety of participants and in addition school staff referred three participants due to their struggles with motivation and performance. Therefore, using gender as a variable to compare outcome was not deemed valid as it was confounded by the effect of the recruitment method.

Table 7 Descriptive statistics of the NYPS variables for males and females at Time 1.

NYPS variables	<i>M(SD)</i>	
	Males ( <i>n</i> = 12)	Females ( <i>n</i> = 11)
Total Academic Expected	0.33 (.65)	1.82 (.87)
Strategies	0.33 (.78)	1.55 (1.29)
Plausibility	0.58 (.90)	1.82 (.87)
Balance	0.17 (.58)	0.73 (.65)

## Attrition

Out of the 24 participants, 23 completed the measures at Time 1, 23 at Time 2, and 18 at Time 3. In spite of my efforts to remind them of the workshop session by means of a phone call and email, those who completed the pre, post and follow-up measures (i.e., Time1, 2 and 3) represented 74% of the total sample. Therefore, it was important to explore whether the participants that completed the measures at Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3 were significantly different from those who did not. In order to do this the participants were grouped in two categories (i.e., completion and non-completion).

Taking the overall sample (i.e.,  $N = 23$ ) and using the data obtained at Time 1, a one-way between groups analysis of variance was conducted using completion as the independent variable and the measures of school engagement (i.e., SES, and GPSS), self-efficacy (i.e., CPSE), Maths and English self-reported performance as the dependent variables. There was a statistically significant difference between those who completed the workshop and attended the follow-up session and those who did not on the combined dependent variables Wilk's Lambda = .45,  $F(5, 14) = 3.34$ ,  $p = .034$ ,  $\eta^2 = .54$ . When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, the only difference to reach statistical significance was self-efficacy  $F(1) = 5.25$ ,  $p = .034$ ,  $\eta^2 = .22$ . Thus, as shown in Figure 13, there was a significant difference in self-efficacy scores between those who completed the measures at Time 3 ( $M = 153.73$ ,  $SD = 29.22$ ) and those who did not ( $M = 119.20$ ,  $SD = 29.05$ ).

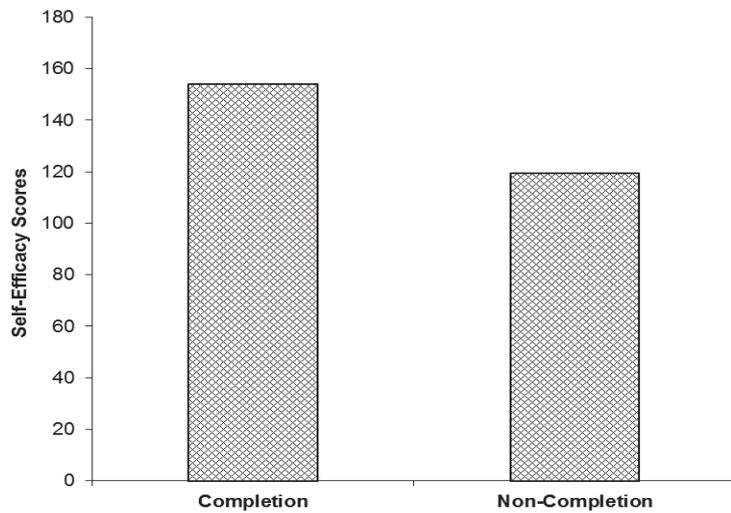


Figure 13. Self-efficacy in the completion and non-completion groups.

In addition, taking the overall sample (i.e.,  $N = 23$ ) and using the data obtained at Time 1, a one-way between groups analysis of variance was conducted using completion as the independent variable and the NYPS as dependent variables. There was no statistically significant difference between those who attended the follow-up session and those who did not on the combined dependent variables  $Wilk's\ Lambda = .89, F(5, 18) = .56, p = .69$ . The overall results of the analyses conducted across these measures showed that at Time 1, the group of participants who did not complete the measures at Time 3 was not different from those who did for these variables (see Figure 14). Therefore, the comparisons using the participants' responses at Time 3 are not giving a biased representation of the overall sample.

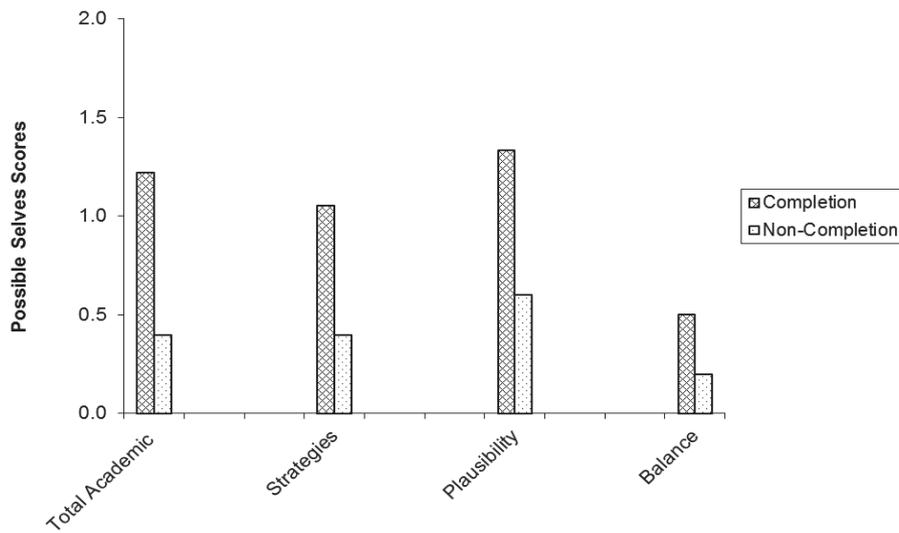


Figure 14. Possible Selves in the completion and non-completion group.

Taking the overall sample (i.e.,  $N = 24$ ) as a whole and using the Diary 1 average study-time, an independent-samples  $t$ -test was conducted to compare the average mood rating and study-time of participants who completed the diary over the intended six weeks and those who completed less than six weeks of the diary. There was no significant difference in average study-time at the time Diary 1 was filled in for those who ended up completing all the diaries ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 2.09$ ) and those who failed to do so  $M = 3.04$ ,  $SD = 2.84$ ;  $t(20) = -.17$ ,  $p = .869$ . Similarly, there was no significant difference in average mood rating at the time Diary 1 was completed for those who ended up completing the diaries over the six weeks ( $M = 6.45$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ) and those who failed to do so  $M = 7.09$ ,  $SD = .69$ ;  $t(20) = -1.34$ ,  $p = .194$ .

## Pre, post and follow-up

The recruitment strategy implemented varied across settings and was noted to impact on the type of participants recruited. A ceiling effect was found among the majority of participants in Setting 1 (5 out of 7) who were already highly engaged in school as evidenced by their scores in the school engagement, self-efficacy and self-reported academic performance. This was also noticed by the school staff who processed the students' paperwork. They commented that some of the participants selected were committed and motivated students. In contrast, in the other settings participants' school engagement and academic performance varied. In Setting 2 there were three participants who had been referred by school staff due to the staff's concern regarding their low school engagement. Given the differences in the recruitment methodology between settings, grouping the sample by setting or as a whole was thought to be misrepresenting its true composition. Therefore, the overall sample was split into two groups: those who scored the highest at the SES measure of school engagement (i.e., cut off point  $\geq 66$ ) and at the Self-efficacy measure (i.e., cut off point  $\geq 179$ ) were grouped as the High-School Engagement Group ( $n = 7$ ; 2 male and 5 female participants), while the rest of the participants were grouped in the Low-School Engagement Group ( $n = 17$ ; 11 male and 6 female participants). Two participants, one in each group, did not complete the follow up measures and therefore were not included in the analysis.

The statistical power to detect small differences between groups in the following analyses was affected negatively by the small sample size. Therefore, results need to be considered with caution as the participants in this study are not representative of any 14 to 15 year old New Zealand adolescent.

It has been suggested that in the case of conducting a series of analyses a sequential Bonferroni correction procedure (Holm, 1979) needs to be implemented in order to avoid the occurrence of finding statistical significance by chance Rice (1989). However, different researchers have argued that the criterion to determine when to use the Bonferroni correction is not clear as there is not a consensus on what it means to have a family of statistical test (Cabin & Mitchell, 2000; Rice, 1989). Further, it has been also argued that the use of such correction has created a bias

whereby non-statistical findings tend not to be reported preventing the publication of important information useful for estimating statistical power (Nakagawa, 2004). For the purpose of this study it was decided not to use a Bonferroni correction. Instead, as suggested by Cabin and Mitchell (2000) the significance of the results was considered in terms of the effect size, common sense, and the implications for future studies.

### **Possible selves**

One of the main intervention objectives was to increase motivation by means of eliciting participants' possible selves. The following analyses were conducted to explore changes in the number of possible selves enlisted by participants as well as on the number and quality of the strategies that accompanied them. That is, I wanted to explore whether there was change in the possible selves of the participants after the intervention. The subsequent section of this analyses addresses whether school engagement, self-efficacy, and self-reported grades changed for those participants whose possible selves were affected after the intervention.

As shown in Figure 15, an initial exploration revealed that the overall number of possible selves enlisted by participants increased from Time 1 [ $M (SD)= 2.29 (1.5)$ ] to Time 2 [ $M (SD)= 2.71(1.38)$ ] for the High-School Engagement and the Low-School Engagement Group [Time 1  $M (SD)= 1.94 (1.64)$ ; Time 2  $M (SD)= 2.76 (1.3)$ ]. This included all the possible selves categories (e.g., achievement, interpersonal, health, and material).

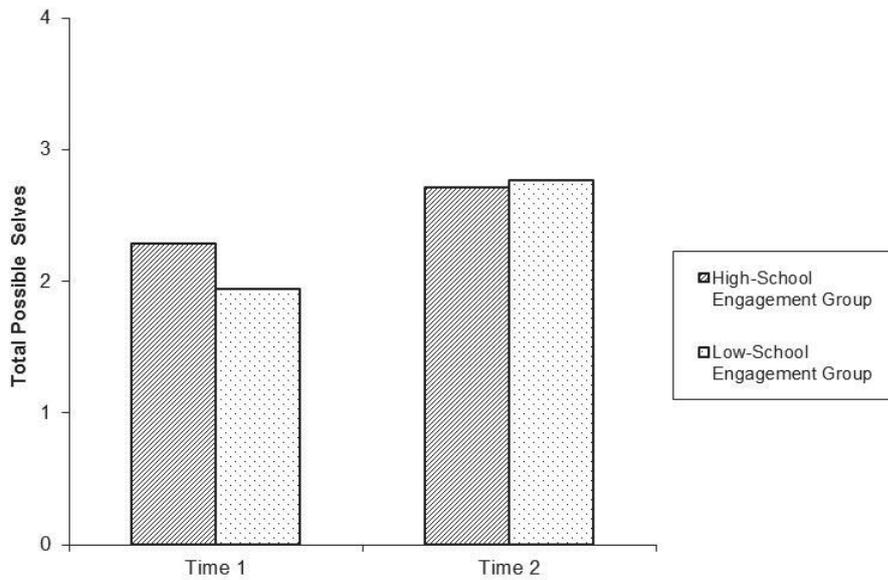


Figure 15. Total Possible Selves enlisted by participants at Time 1 and Time 2 for the High-School Engagement and Low-School Engagement groups.

Thus, it was important to first analyse whether there was evidence of change between pre-intervention (Time 1) and post-intervention (Time 2) scores in the different NYPS variables (Total of Academic Expected Possible Selves, Strategies, Plausibility, and Balance) for the participants overall. In addition, it was also important to analyse whether there was evidence of further change or maintenance at the 3-month follow-up (Time 3). This analysis was approached using one-way repeated measures analyses of variance. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 8.

Prior to the following analyses presented in this section the assumption of normality was assessed with a Shapiro-Wilk test. The distribution of the Low-School and High-School Engagement groups using the Time 1 values for each of the variables analysed is reported in the Appendix S. Unless otherwise stated in the report of the particular analysis the variables were found to meet this assumption.

Similarly, the assumption of independence was assessed by analysing the correlation between variables. There were not significant correlations between the school engagement, self-efficacy, self-reported academic performance with the possible selves variables (see Appendix Q).

Therefore, the assumption of independence was met when analysing the High and Low-Engagement groups (based on the school engagement and self-efficacy scores) and the possible selves variables.

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics for the Next Year Possible Selves variables for the High-School Engagement and Low-School Engagement groups, at Time 1 (Pre-intervention), Time 2 (Post-intervention), and Time 3 (Follow up).*

NYPS variable	Time	High-School Engagement ( <i>n</i> = 6)	Low-School Engagement ( <i>n</i> = 16)
		<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Total Academic Expected	Time 1	1.83 (1.05)	0.81 (.75)
	Time 2	1.33 (.89)	1.13 (1.37)
	Time 3	1.8 (1.64)	1.61 (1.04)
Strategies	Time 1	2.17 (.73)	0.5 (1.47)
	Time 2	2.67 (.89)	0.88 (1.03)
	Time 3	1.8 (1.48)	1.15 (1.06)
Plausibility	Time 1	2.17 (.89)	0.88 (.98)
	Time 2	2.67 (.98)	1.19 (1.21)
	Time 3	3 (1.12)	2.23 (1.3)
Balance	Time 1	0.67 (.72)	0.38 (.52)
	Time 2	1.67 (.89)	1 (.52)
	Time 3	2 (.71)	1.46 (1.05)

### ***Total of academic expected possible selves***

Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity was not violated  $X^2(2) = 4.28, p = .118$ .

The analysis revealed there was no evidence of the effect for time between Time 1 and Time 2 Time 3 in the number of enlisted Academic Expected Possible Selves in the Low-School Engagement

Group Wilk's Lambda = .63,  $F(2, 11) = 3.21$ ,  $p = .08$ . However, there was a significant difference between Time 1 and Time 3 in the Low-School Engagement Group Wilk's Lambda = .63,  $F(2, 12) = 6.94$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .37$  that indicated a significant increment in the Total Academic Expected Possible Selves when comparing Time 3 with Time 1.

As shown in Figure 16, the High-School Engagement Group Total Academic Expected Possible Selves dropped from Time 1 to Time 3. However, previous exploration had revealed an actual increase of the total number of possible selves enlisted when all categories of possible selves were included. Therefore, this change was better explained by a diversification of types of possible selves enlisted in this group at Time 2 and Time 3. That is, after their participation in the workshop the participants in the High-School Engagement Group had started to consider other aspects of their future selves, not only the academic one. As such, the workshop increased possible selves, but tended to do so most for those who were less motivated to begin with.

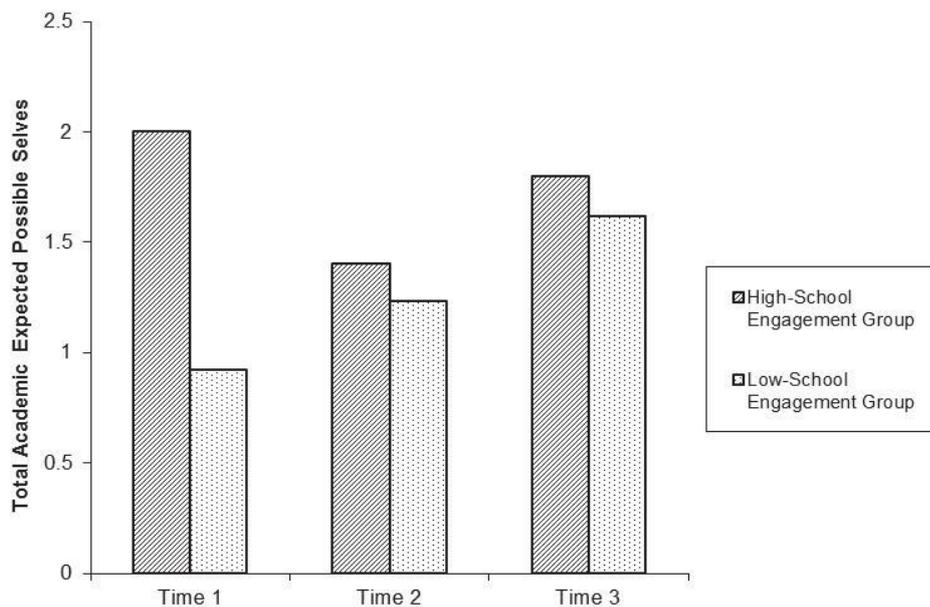
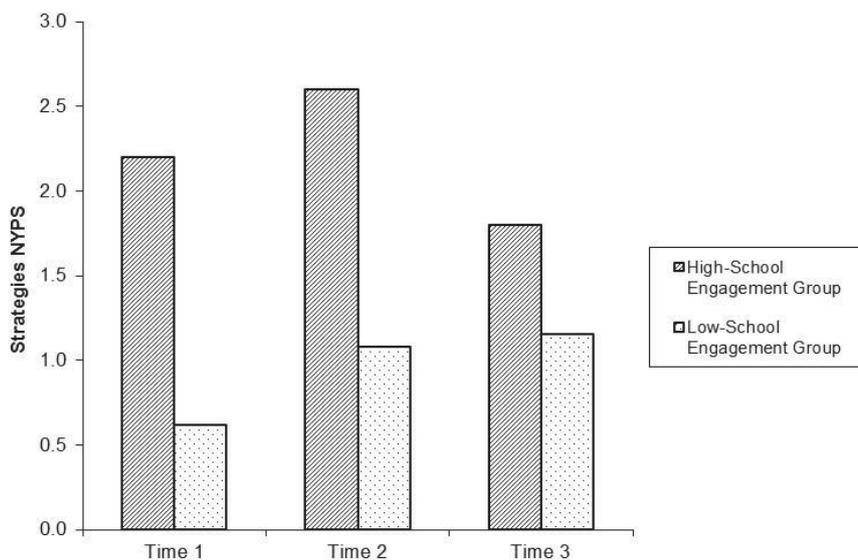


Figure 16. Total Academic Expected Possible Selves enlisted by participants at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3 for the High-School Engagement and the Low-School Engagement groups.

### ***Strategies enlisted for the academic possible selves***

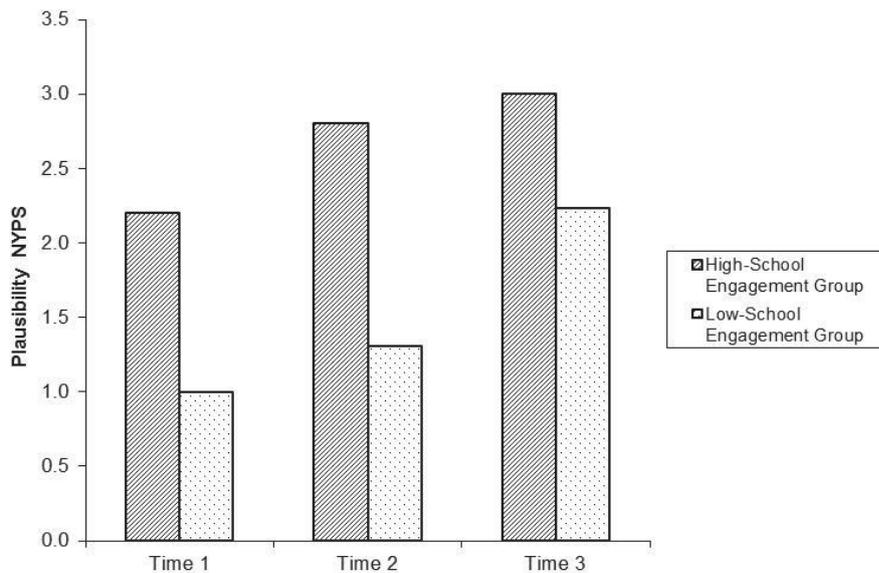
Participants were asked to enlist the strategies they have to pursue their academic possible selves. This variable violated the assumption of normality ( $SW = .75$ ,  $df = 13$ ,  $p = .002$ ) for the Low-Engagement Group. Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity was not violated  $X^2(2) = 4.94$ ,  $p = .084$ . The analysis revealed that there was not a significant effect for time on the number of strategies for the High-School Engagement Group Wilk's Lambda = .80,  $F(2, 3) = .37$ ,  $p = .71$ . However, there was a marginally effect for time between Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3 on the number of Strategies enlisted in Low-School Engagement Group, that did not reach statistical significance Wilk's Lambda = .63,  $F(2, 11) = 3.3$ ,  $p = .075$  (see Figure 17).



*Figure 17.* Strategies to attain academic expected possible selves enlisted by participants at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3 for the High-School Engagement and the Low-School Engagement groups.

***Plausibility of the strategies enlisted for the academic possible selves***

Participants' enlisted strategies were rated in terms of their plausibility. This variable violated the assumption of normality ( $SW = .79$ ,  $df = 13$ ,  $p = .005$ ) for the Low-School Engagement Group and for the High-School Engagement group ( $SW = .64$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity was not violated  $X^2(2) = 5.69$ ,  $p = .058$ . The analysis revealed a significant effect of time between Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3 on the Plausibility level of the enlisted strategies for the Low-School Engagement Group, Wilk's Lambda = .55,  $F(2, 11) = 4.49$ ,  $p = .037$ ,  $\eta^2 = .45$ , but not for the High-School Engagement Group Wilk's Lambda = .62,  $F(2, 3) = .91$ ,  $p = .49$  (see Figure 18).



*Figure 18.* Level of Plausibility of the strategies enlisted by participants at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3 for the High-School Engagement and the Low-School Engagement groups.

***Balance between expected and feared academic possible selves***

Balance between the participants' expected and feared academic possible selves was rated and compared across time. This variable validated the assumption of normality ( $SW = .53$ ,  $df = 13$ ,  $p = 0$ ) for the Low-School Engagement Group. Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity was not violated  $X^2(2) = 2.75$ ,  $p = .253$ . The analysis revealed a significant effect of time between Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3 on possible selves Balance for the Low-School Engagement Group Wilk's Lambda = .52,  $F(2, 11) = 5.11$ ,  $p = .027$ ,  $\eta^2 = .48$ , and for the High-School Engagement Group Wilk's Lambda = .07,  $F(2, 3) = 21.00$ ,  $p = .017$ ,  $\eta^2 = .93$  (see Figure 19).

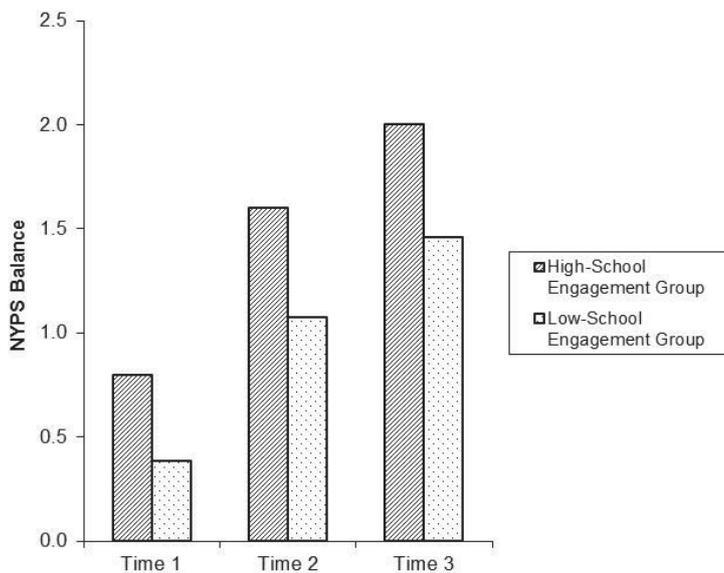


Figure 19. Balance between expected and to be avoided possible selves enlisted by participants at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3 for the High-School Engagement and the Low-School Engagement groups.

### ***School engagement and self-efficacy***

To be able to explore change in those participants who benefited from the workshop (i.e., as measured by an increase in their NYPS scores), an NYPS Overall Score was calculated adding participants' scores in the different NYPS variables. The participants who showed positive change between Time 1 and Time 2 in the NYPS Overall score were grouped into the Responder Group ( $n = 15$ ; 10 male and 5 female participants).

It was hypothesised that change in the participants' possible selves would impact on their school engagement and self-efficacy beliefs, and that this impact will be more likely to be detected at Time 3 when the participants who had changed as a result of the intervention have had some time to implement the new skills and knowledge. To explore change, the scores of the Responder Group in the measures of school engagement (SES and GPSS), self-efficacy (CPSE), and self-reported academic performance were compared between Time 1 and Time 3 using a one-way repeated measures analysis of variance. Means and standard deviations for the measures explored are presented in Table 9.

Prior to the analyses presented in this section the assumption of normality was assessed with a Shapiro-Wilk test. The distribution of the Responder group using the Time 1 values for each of the variables analysed is reported in the Appendix S. For the Responder Group the variables that did not meet this assumption were the School Engagement Scale, Math, English, and Mood Rating. Therefore, in the case of School Engagement Scale, Math, English, and Mood Rating the interpretation of the presented results requires caution as for these variables the assumption of sphericity was violated. In spite of such violation, it was considered important to report these non-significant results as this could inform further research designed methodology and measure selection.

Table 9

*Descriptive Statistics for SES, GPSS, CPSE, Maths and English for the Responder Group at Time 1 and Time 3.*

Time	SES	GPSS	CPSE	Maths	English
<i>N</i>	12	11	10	12	12
Time 1	51.42 (10.87)	49.73 (11.21)	140.3 (30.78)	2.08 (.9)	2.50 (.9)
Time 3	50.17 (10.68)	50.36 (9.11)	139.4 (21.92)	2.33 (1.15)	2.75 (.87)

Despite the change observed in some of the NYPS variables. There was no significant change in the scores of the school engagement measures SES Wilk's Lambda = .95,  $F(1, 11) = .603$ ,  $p = .45$ ; GPSS Wilk's Lambda = .97,  $F(1, 10) = .264$ ,  $p = .69$  between Time 1 and Time 3 for the Responder Group (see Figure 20).

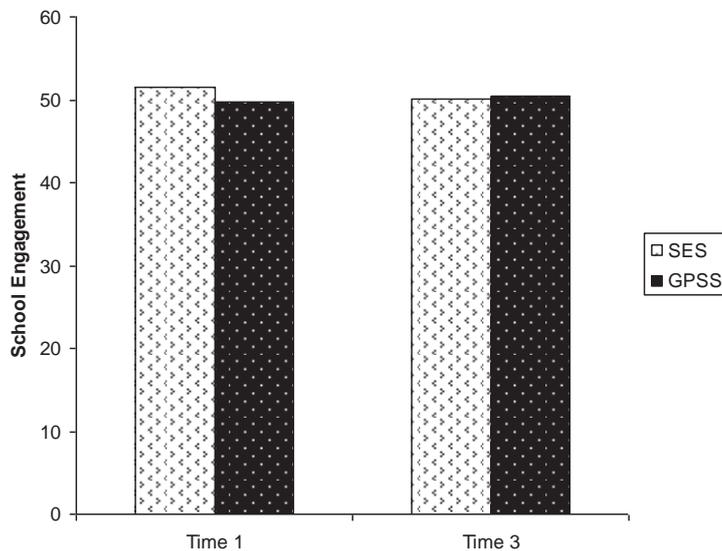


Figure 20. School Engagement scores at Time 1 and Time 3 for the Responder Group.

Similarly, as shown in Figure 21 there was no significant difference between the scores of the self-efficacy measure at Time 1 and Time 3 Wilk's Lambda = 1,  $F(1, 9) = .033$ ,  $p = .86$  for the Responder Group.

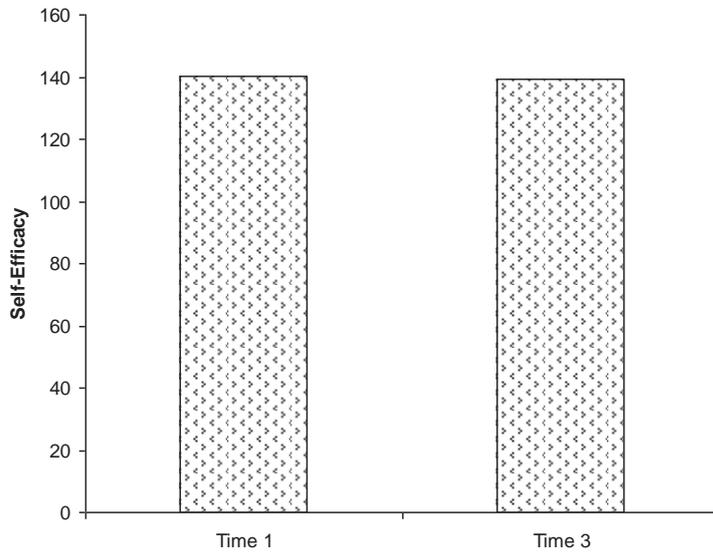


Figure 21. Self-Efficacy scores at Time 1 and Time 3 for the Responder Group.

As shown in Figure 22, the self-reported academic performance increased over time. However, in spite of an increase in the mean from Time 1 to Time 3 in self-reported performances, these changes were not statistically significant for Maths Wilk's Lambda = .85,  $F(1, 11) = 1.94$ ,  $p = .19$ , and English Wilk's Lambda = .85,  $F(1, 11) = 1.94$ ,  $p = .19$  for the Responder Group.

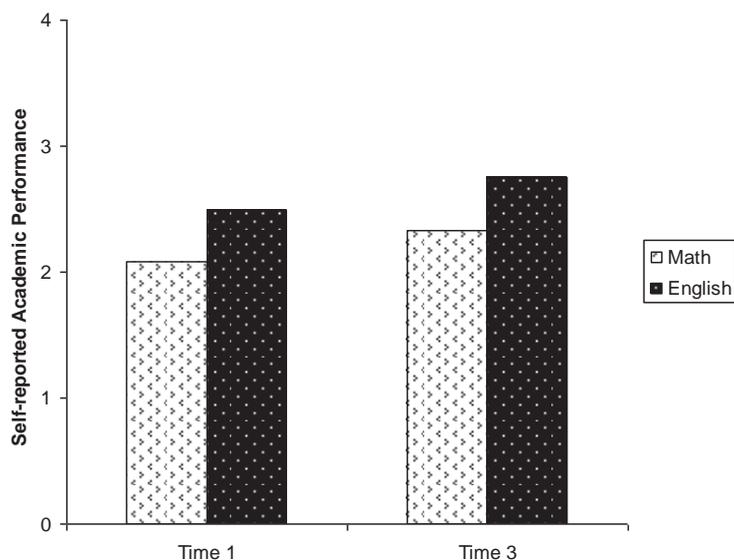


Figure 22 Self-reported Maths and English performance at Time 1 and Time 3 for the Responder Group.

Further investigation revealed that out of the whole sample that completed measures at Time 3 ( $n = 18$ ) only six participants had increased their Maths self-reported performance from Time 1 to Time 3. Interestingly, 33% (i.e., 2 male participants) belonged to the Responder Group. In this group, one participant had gone from *no credit* to *credit*, the other participant had gone from *merit* to *excellence*.

Similarly, out of the whole sample that completed measures at Time 3 ( $n = 18$ ) only six participants reported and increased in their English self-reported performance. Notably, 66% (i.e., 4 participants, all male) belonged to the Responder Group. In this group, one participant went from *no credit* to *credit*, one participant went from *credit* to *merit*, and one participant went from *merit* to *excellence*. Two of these participants (e.g., one of them who in both Maths and English went from no credit to credit) also belonged to those who had gone up a grade in Maths.

### **Study-time**

As with other variables explored, it was hypothesised that changes in the participants' possible selves would impact on participants' study-time (i.e., more time spent doing homework or studying as reported in the diaries) which would be indicative of increased commitment towards school. A one-way repeated measures analysis of variance was conducted to compare the Study Time at the time Diary 1, Diary 3 and Diary 6 were filled in for those in the Responder ( $n = 6$ ) who completed the diaries over the six weeks (see Appendix M). Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity was not violated  $X^2(2) = 2.01, p = .365$ . The means and standard deviations are shown in Table 10. There was a significant effect for time for the Responder group Wilk's Lambda = .20,  $F(2, 4) = 8.11, p = .039, \eta^2 = .8$  (see Figure 23).

Table 10  
Descriptive statistics for Study Time and Mood Rating variables at three points in time for the Responder Group.

	<i>M (SD)</i>	
	Study Time ( $n = 6$ )	Mood Rating ( $n = 6$ )
Diary 1	17.33 (16.48)	5.97 (1.56)
Diary 3	41.33 (37.73)	6.07 (2.11)
Diary 6	56.33 (50.48)	6.12 (1.01)

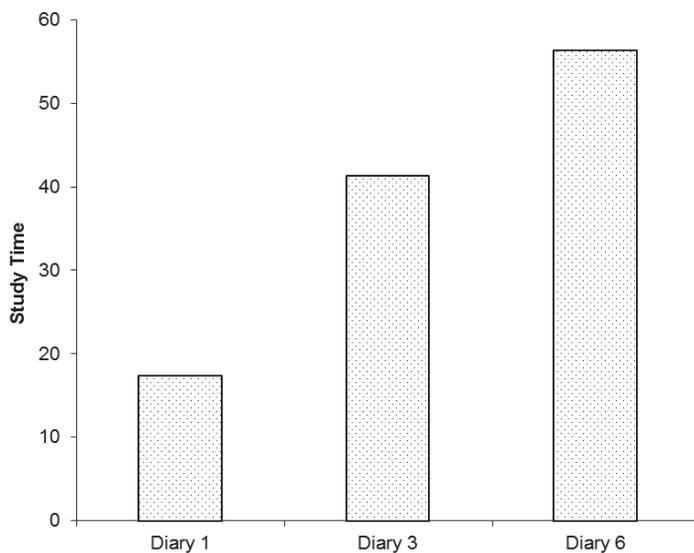


Figure 23. Weekly average reported Study Time in minutes at three points in time for the Responder Group.

### ***Mood rating***

As with other variables explored, it was hypothesised that changes in the participants' possible selves would impact in participants' commitment towards school, and that such change would be reflected in their overall affective engagement at school and this would be reflected in their mood (i.e., Mood Rating reported in the diaries). Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity was not violated  $X^2(2) = 2.88, p = .236$ . A one-way repeated measures analysis of variance was conducted to compare Mood Rating at the time Diary 1, Diary 3 and Diary 6 were filled in for those in the Responder ( $n = 6$ ) who completed the diaries over the six weeks. The means and standard deviations are shown in Table 10. There was no significant effect for time for the Responder group Wilk's Lambda = .97,  $F(2, 4) = .047, p = .95$  (see Figure 24).

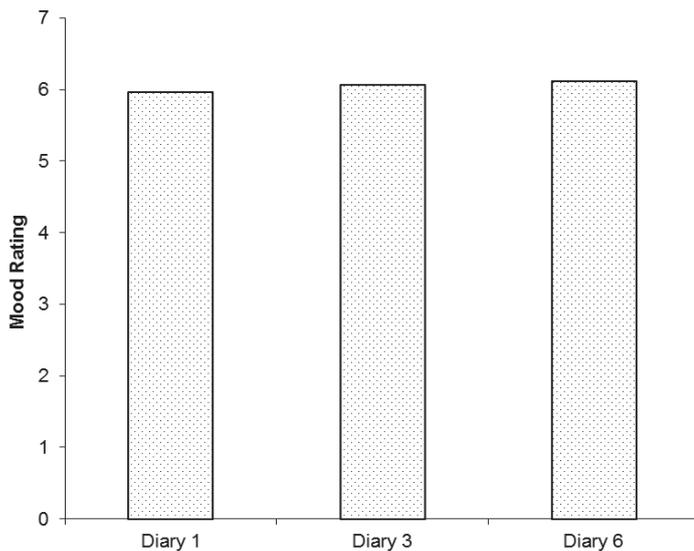


Figure 24. Weekly average reported Mood Rating at three points in time for the Responder Group.

## Summary

The quantitative analyses of these results show that this is a feasible brief group intervention which provides a suitable environment to discuss the relevance of the outcomes offered by school with regards to the students' vision of their future. After the intervention there was an improvement on participants' number of academic expected possible selves as well as an improvement in the strategies' quality (i.e., plausibility) and balance. This was particularly noticeable in participants who had lower baseline scores on school engagement and self-efficacy. In addition, there was an improvement in the time that participants reported doing homework or studying. Nevertheless, there was not quantitative evidence of improvement in participants' school engagement (as measured by the scales utilised) and performance (i.e., better grades and harder work).

The differences in the recruitment criteria between settings, the presence of a ceiling effect, the lack of a control group, having a small sample size, and the potential effect of social desirability in the participants' responses are some of the limitations of this study.

## CHAPTER 4 : POSSIBLE SELVES WORKSHOP OBSERVATIONS

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### Ground Rules and group process

A fundamental component of the workshop was the development of the ground rules for the group. This activity was the first activity as a group and had the purpose of setting the foundations for a safe and supportive environment. It is the role of the facilitator to ensure that critical rules about respect are represented. Based on the principles of collaboration, active participation, and phenomenological approach, it is up to the participants to brainstorm and phrase the rules. It is also up to the participants of the group to decide when good enough ground rules had been enlisted and they feel safe to start working. Thus, different rules were stated in each setting. For all of the groups I suggested and defined “Confidentiality” and its limitations (i.e., as stated by the code of ethics in psychology) as a first rule. Besides providing the participants with the information regarding the limitations in terms of safety, this rule also had the purpose of ensuring that the material discussed in the group would remain confidential to the group (i.e., not talked about with friends that were not part of the workshop). Besides confidentiality, there were three rules that I directly introduced to the groups once they have finished brainstorming and they were satisfied with the rules they have stated. In order to encourage full engagement in the workshop I introduced two rules: “No use of cell phones during the sessions”, and “To have fun”. Additionally, in order to be able to monitor the quality of the interactions between participants I introduced the rule: “To share all the jokes” and asked them to explain to me the jokes I could not understand.

Table 11 shows the rules introduced by the participants. In Setting 1 the rules proposed by the participants included the themes of trust (e.g., “To trust in one another”), acceptance (e.g., “To accept each other’s ideas”), participation (e.g., “To participate and contribute”), and general respect (e.g., “To respect each other’s opinions thoughts and feelings”). Similarly, in Setting 2 the rules proposed by the participants included the themes of trust (e.g., “To share”), acceptance (e.g., “No judgements”), participation (e.g., “To speak out”), general respect (e.g., “Respect every one’s

ideas”), and within the theme of respect there were specific rules about bullying (e.g., “No bullying”). In Setting 3, the rules proposed by the participants included the themes acceptance (e.g., “Acceptance, non-judgemental”), participation (e.g., “Active participation”), support (e.g., “Try to encourage each other”), general respect (i.e., “Respect: be nice to people in the group”), and within the theme of respect there was a specific rule about stealing (i.e., “No stealing”).

In summary, the settings differed in the types of themes contained in the ground rules as well as in the amount of ground rules elicited per theme (see Table 11).

Table 11  
*Ground rules elicited by the participants during the first session of the intervention per setting.*

Theme	Setting 1	Setting 2	Setting 3
• Trust	“To trust in one another”, “Not to be shy, to give your opinion and be confident”		“Honesty”
• Acceptance	“Not to judge each other”, “To accept each other’s ideas”, “No criticism”	“No judgements (e.g., what people look like)”	“Acceptance, non-judgemental”
• Respect	“To respect others’ opinions, thoughts and feelings”, “To listen to opinions”	“Respect every one’s ideas”, “Respectable behaviour”, “To be fair”  “No bullying”, “No put downs”, “Not to laugh at peoples’ mistakes”	“Respect: be nice to people in the group”
• Participation	“To participate and contribute”, “One person talking at a time”	“Active Participation”, “One Person talking at a time”, “Speak out”	“Team work”, “Active participation”
• Support			“Try to encourage each other”, “Give positive feedback, gives the person the opportunity to improve”

For example, in Setting 1 the participants elicited two elaborated rules about “Trust” while this theme was not directly addressed in the other settings. In Setting 2 the participants elicited three rules about “Bullying”, a theme that was only present in this setting. Similarly, Setting 3 can be

distinguished by being the only one in which two rules about “Support” were elicited, and the importance of team work was mentioned. It is noticeable that the emphasis on certain ground rules’ themes within each setting corresponds to the observations collected from each workshop session (i.e., reported on the researcher’s diary), and to the workshop’s feedback provided by the participants during the follow-up session (see Appendix N).

Setting 1 was unique in regards to the emphasis placed in the theme *trust* as well as in the elaborated rules in the theme of *acceptance*. The themes of trust and acceptance were also present when, during the first session (i.e., as part of the sausages activity), the participants were asked to write in their manuals their likes and dislikes. In this activity, two participants stated their difficulty in sharing, and another participant stated her dislike of “people who spread rumours/start dramas”. It was also noted that the group appeared to be composed of two cliques, although it was also observed that the quality of the interactions between all the members of the group were harmonious and constructive. Upon reflection, I started every following session (i.e., in all settings) by asking the participants whether they felt the rules had been respected over the course of the week since the last session. In particular I asked whether the rules of confidentiality had been respected (i.e., what is said in this room stays in this room) and encourage them bring up any concerns regarding the group. Throughout the sessions in Setting 1 participants denied any concerns in this respect, and the bonding of the group was observed to progress satisfactorily. This observation was consistent with participants’ feedback. The feedback from this group was the most positive when compared to the other settings. In fact, six participants (i.e.,  $n = 7$ ) reported that all components of the workshop were useful, and that the workshop had impacted positively on their school performance. Even though most of the participants in this setting were already motivated prior to the workshop (i.e., belonged to the High-School Engagement group), they also benefited from this experience. In fact, these participants elaborated on the way they thought the workshop experienced helped, and all of them stated that they would recommend the workshop to other students. There was only one participant who would change the sausages activity as she did not “get the point of it”.

In Setting 2 there was particular emphasis on the themes of *respect* and, in particular, *bullying*. According to the observations from the sessions in Setting 2 the group process was initially limited by the constant teasing and judgemental nature of the interactions between the participants. This was the only setting in which open put downs were made, including a racist comment directed at one of the participants. Despite the participants' original awareness of the importance of respect, and in spite of their initiative to introduce rules about respect and bullying, they themselves were the ones breaking these rules. In order to work successfully with this group, the intervention initially focused on: (a) Reflecting with the participants on the dilemma (i.e., being aware of the importance of respect and at the same time initiating or participating on disrespectful interactions); (b) Reflecting with the participants on how being constantly attacking or on guard impacted negatively on their ability to focus and fully engage in the workshop; and (c) Pointing out to them when these interactions were taking place to encourage responsibility when choosing to behave in a certain way. These observations about group process were consistent with what participants in this setting reported in the feedback forms. When they were asked what was the main thing they learnt from the workshop two participants mentioned "Respect" and "Be respectful". Moreover, when they were asked what part of the workshop was less useful, a different participant reported "Us guys laughing at each other". Addressing group dynamics and group process is fundamental for the establishment of a safe environment in which learning and change can occur. Participants were very aware of these processes from the beginning to the end. Thus facilitators need to take the group process seriously. Accordingly, the manual should be used as a guide rather than an inflexibly programmed set of activities. In fact, observations from this sample indicate that working on subsequent workshop programme activities might be premature and unsuccessful if the ground rules have not been set and group process has not been addressed.

Observations about the group process in Setting 3, as reported in the researcher's diary of the sessions, mentioned that those who knew each other and were friends were noted staying close and avoid interaction with the others. For example, when asked to work in pairs during the *sausages* activity one participant was noted to be disengaged and to have a facial expression of discontent

and annoyance at the pair (i.e., it was a female-female pair). Additionally, it was observed that they would not pass the food around (i.e., snacks consisting of fresh fruit, crackers and biscuits were provided to the participants in each workshop session) to those in the group they were not familiar with. The cliques within this group were strong, preventing them from coming together. Although this group differentiated from the other settings by eliciting and stating ground rules about “Team work”, and “Support” their behaviour was one of segregation. Unfortunately, due to the subtle nature of such behaviour I did not reflect on this dilemma with them, and thus, this behaviour continued to influence the group process. This observation about group process was consistent with what some participants in Setting 3 reported in the feedback forms. For example, three participants reported that the *sausages* activity was the part of the workshop that was least useful. Interestingly, this activity aims to encourage people to get to know each other by working in pairs randomly assigned to take turns in talking about their likes and dislikes. It appears that this activity was challenging for some members of the group, probably due to their reluctance to interact with unfamiliar members of the group. This observation was further supported by a different participant who, in the feedback form, suggested: “We could do more hands on activities to make the group not so awkward around each other”, when he was asked “what parts of the workshop would you change and how?”

Thus, the observations and the participants’ feedback across settings suggest that the difference in the thematic composition of the ground rules was an indicator of setting’s uniqueness and the particular needs the participants perceived within each setting.

## Possible Selves Tree

The Possible Selves Tree activity was introduced to the participants during the workshop's second session across the three settings. With some adaptations (see Appendix AA for a full description of the tasks), this activity was based on the original work of Hock and colleagues. The activity consisted of asking the participants to draw a tree that represents them as a person (see Appendix W for an example). The drawing includes different components: the roots (i.e., one's qualities and values), the main branches (i.e., areas of one's life that one would like to grow), and the adjacent branches (i.e., the actions that one is taking, or can take to enhance the main branch's growth). The support network that one utilises or can utilise to enhance one's growth is represented by elements in the environment that surrounds the tree, such as sun and water. Finally, the fears that one might have are represented by the external elements that could damage the tree or prevent its growth, such as fire.

This section presents the qualitative description of the themes that emerged in each setting when the participants' trees were examined.

### Roots

The values represented as roots of the tree that the participants enlisted were classified according to the 10 value types described by (Schwartz, 1992).

In Setting 1, the average number of roots that participants drew ranged from four to seven ( $M= 5.2$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ). In this setting, participants enlisted values of achievement (e.g., hardworking, committed, perseverant), benevolence (e.g., loving), conformity (e.g., respectful, good manners, trustworthy, honest, loyal), hedonism (e.g., funny), power (e.g., leadership, confidence), tradition (e.g., faithful, God), and universalism (e.g., caring, helpful, understanding, supportive, kind, good deeds).

In Setting 2, the average number of roots that participants drew ranged from zero to seven ( $M= 5.2$ ,  $SD = 2$ ). In this setting, participants enlisted values of achievement (e.g., hardworking,

perseverant, smart, strong, fast, fit, healthy), benevolence (e.g., sharing with friends and family), conformity (e.g., honest), hedonism (e.g., funny), safety (e.g., careful), self-direction (e.g., responsible, self-controlled, integral, brave), and universalism (e.g., kind, compassionate, caring, patient, giving, respectful).

In Setting 3, the average number of roots that participants drew ranged from three to seven ( $M = 5.6$ ,  $SD = 1.5$ ). In this setting participants enlisted values of achievement (e.g., determined, perfectionist, intelligent, hardworking), benevolence (e.g., family, good friends, loving), conformity (e.g., honest, loyal, magnanimous), hedonism (e.g., having fun), safety (e.g., staying happy), self-direction (e.g., brave, artistic, creative, responsible), stimulation (e.g., humour, sensitivity, passion), and universalism (e.g., listening, friendly, helpful, loyal, caring, nice, supportive, accepting).

## Branches

Participants were asked to draw at least three main branches, one representing them as a student (i.e., *student branch*), one representing them in their relationship with others (i.e., *interpersonal branch*), and one representing them in their hobby or area of interest (i.e., *area of interest branch*). While the student branch was fixed, the *interpersonal* and *area of interest* branches were more flexible, and the participants chose a topic for them, such as their role as a family member in the *interpersonal* branch, and sports in the *area of interest* branch. In addition, participants were asked to draw adjacent branches to represent the actions taken or needed to be taken to enhance the main branch's growth.

### Student branch

When analysing participants' adjacent branches in the student branch two main grouping themes were found: *in school behaviour* and *out of school behaviour*. As shown in Table 12, some subthemes were found in all settings while others were particular to a specific setting.

Table 12

*Actions that enhance growth as a student: themes identified from the participants' student branch in the Possible Selves Tree.*

Theme		Setting 1	Setting 2	Setting 3
In School Behaviour	• Attend class		✓	✓
	• Complete class work	✓	✓	✓
	• Listen to teachers	✓	✓	✓
	• Choose the right subjects			✓
	• Take better notes		✓	
	• Problem solving when necessary			✓
	• Avoid distractions	✓	✓	✓
	• Monitor progress			✓
	• Take in knowledge		✓	✓
Out of School Behaviour	• Plan school work and study time	✓	✓	✓
	• Complete homework	✓	✓	✓
	• Prioritise school work over other activities	✓		
	• Study	✓	✓	✓
	• Know what it is needed		✓	✓
	• Set goals			✓
	• Practise what has been learnt			✓
	• Aim for a higher standard		✓	✓
	• Work hard	✓	✓	
• Keep it interesting and fun	✓		✓	

For example, *in school behaviour* common across settings included: completing class work, listening to teachers and avoiding distractions.

Similarly, *out of school behaviour* common across the setting included completing homework, and planning school work and study time. Examples of the strategies for planning work and study time enlisted by the participants across settings included “not leaving it to the last minute”, “using a diary”, and “having a schedule”.

Within Setting 1, avoiding distractions and focusing was mentioned prominently by five out of seven participants. In Setting 2, work completion and class attendance were mentioned prominently by seven and four out of 10 participants respectively. Setting 3 was the only setting in which two out of seven participants mentioned keeping school work interesting or fun. Other commonalities within

this setting included work completion (i.e., three out of seven participants), and avoiding distractions and focusing (i.e., two out of seven participants).

### **Interpersonal branch**

In Setting 1, the topics of the *interpersonal* branch included identity as a person, a friend, and their cultural identity (e.g., Samoan). Some examples of the content from the *inter-personal* branch included: spending time with family and friends, helping siblings, listening, talking, being more open, and respecting the elders as well as practising reading, writing, and speaking Samoan.

In Setting 2, the topics of the *interpersonal* branch included identity as a person, sibling, and as a family member. Some examples of the content from the *inter-personal* branch included: being confident, nicer to others, respectful to others and to oneself, being honest, open, supportive, a good role model, helpful, trusting peers, sharing, setting goals, accepting oneself, learning about others and persevering.

In Setting 3, the topics of the *interpersonal* branch included identity as a sibling, and as a friend. Some examples of the content from the *inter-personal* branch included: spending more time with siblings/friends, being nicer, loyal, caring, supportive, a good role model, helpful, and open to meeting new people.

### **Area of interest branch**

In Setting 1 the *areas of interest* branch topics included: musician, journalist, sports player, nursing, ranger, and cooking. Some examples of the content from the *area of interest* branch included: learning new things, practising, attending training or meetings, eating healthily, being punctual, and being organised. In Setting 2 the *area of interest* branch topics included computers, sports, music, cooking and construction. Some examples of the content from the *area of interest* branch included: committing, practising more, learning new skills, working hard, learning from the experts, working at one's own pace, having the right attitude and having fun. In Setting 3, the *area of interest* branch

topics included: sports, music, modelling, graphic design, driving and sewing. Some examples of the content from the *area of interest* branch included: practising more, working hard, being confident, creating, studying, saving up to invest in future education, asking for help when needed and having fun.

## Fears

Participants were asked to draw elements external to the tree that could damage the tree or prevent its growth (e.g., fire) to represent their fears in life. These fears were classified using the coding instructions described by Oyserman (2004). According to this classification, fears could be coded within the following overall themes: achievement, interpersonal relationships, personality traits, physical (body and health), material or lifestyle, and non-normative (e.g., illicit behaviour). Interestingly, in the data obtained in this study, two new themes emerged: death and culture or spiritual. The theme of death has been briefly addressed by Oyserman who classified it within the non-normative category (e.g., being killed). However, in my data, death appeared across the three settings most of the time on its own and was not associated to a health or non-normative context. Therefore, in this analysis death was granted a category on its own, adding to the overall themes previously coded (Oyserman, 2004).

Likewise, the theme of culture as part of the participants' identity was also noticeable in two of the settings. Cultural identity or spiritual identity has not been previously included within Oyserman's coding. Interestingly, cultural identity and spirituality were also found to be represented in other elements of the tree (e.g., a branch). While it could arguably be incorporated within the overall lifestyle theme, based on the analysis of this data it was considered to be an important theme of its own. Therefore, in this analysis cultural or spiritual identity was granted a category on its own, adding to the overall themes previously coded (Oyserman, 2004).

In Setting 1 the following themes were found: achievement (e.g., not getting into university, getting distracted in class, failing), interpersonal (e.g., fear of losing friends, or pushing people away), personality (e.g., fear being mean or inconsiderate), cultural or spiritual (e.g., fear of losing

Samoan language, losing faith), non-normative (e.g., fear of making the wrong choices), and death (e.g., fear of someone in the family dying). The elements that were drawn to represent these fears were: fire, pest, axe and pollution. As shown in Table 13, the loading of each theme varied across categories, achievement being the most mentioned by the participants in this setting.

Table 13  
*Fear category frequency as mentioned by participants in the Possible Selves Tree task across settings.*

Categories	Setting 1 %	Setting 2 %	Setting 3 %
1. Achievement	57	44	40
2. Interpersonal Relationships	13	33	46
3. Personality Traits	13	17	-
4. Physical/Health	-	-	7
5. Material/Life style	-	-	-
6. Non-normative	4	6	-
7. Death	4	-	7
8. Culture-Spiritual	9	-	-

In Setting 2 the following themes were found: achievement (e.g., fear of failing NCEA, laziness), interpersonal (e.g., losing friends or family, not getting support), personality (e.g., fear of relying on other people too much), and non-normative (e.g., fear of smoking). The only element drawn by all participants in this setting was fire. Similar to Setting 1, as shown in Table 13, the loading of each theme varied across categories, achievement being the most mentioned by the participants in this setting.

In Setting 3 the following themes were found: achievement (e.g., fear of failing NCEA), interpersonal (e.g., fear of not having strong enough bonds with family, being bullied), health (e.g., fear of losing hearing or a hand), death (e.g., fear of own death, death of someone close). The elements drawn by participants in this setting to represent their fears were: acid rain, polluted compost, pests, clouds blocking the sunlight, draught, fire, axe, graffiti and chain saw. As shown in

Table 13, the loading of each theme varied across categories, interpersonal relationships being the most mentioned by the participants in this setting, followed closely by achievement.

## Support

Participants were asked to draw elements external to the tree that could enhance the tree's growth (e.g., water) to represent the different components of their support network in life. Between 7 and 9% of the participants enlisted teachers as a source of support; none of them enlisted youth community services, and only one student enlisted youth support services within the school.

As shown in Table 14, different supports had different loadings in each setting. In Setting 1, participants identified friends, family, teachers and mentors as supports which were represented by drawings of water, sun and fertiliser. The most frequently enlisted support was friends, followed by family and teachers. In Setting 2, participants identified family, friends, teachers and school as supports which were represented as water, sun, fertiliser and grass. The most frequently enlisted support was family, followed by friends and teachers. In Setting 3, participants identified family, friends, teachers, books, pets, relationships and school. These were represented by drawings of water, sun, organic compost, deforestation, fertiliser and forest ranger. The most frequently enlisted support was family, closely followed by friends and teachers.

Table 14

*Support category frequency as mentioned by participants in the Possible Selves Tree task across settings.*

Categories	Setting 1 %	Setting 2 %	Setting 3 %
Family	37	57	32
Friends	45	29	27
Teachers	9	7	9
School	-	7	9
Mentors	9	-	-
Books	-	-	9
Pets	-	-	9
Relationships	-	-	5

## Summary

The Possible Selves Tree was observed to be a strategy that engaged most of the students, providing important information about their positive and negative possible selves. It provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on what is important to them, what they want in their future, and how they can work towards it. The student branch was compulsory, therefore providing limited indication regarding the importance of school. However, it was noticeable that most participants mentioned school failure as one of their fears. While exploring the positive possible selves might not have included school as important to them (if it was not compulsory), the negative possible selves did. In fact, 61% of the overall sample and 56% of the Low-School Engagement Group feared failing at school. Knowing what participants want in their future allowed the facilitator to explore collaboratively with the participant the role that school outcome can potentially play in such desired future.

Moreover, the tree provided the facilitator with important information to identify strengths (e.g., participants' values and self-knowledge) and deficits (e.g., difficulty eliciting concrete realistic achievable goals). Such information was used to provide the participants with constructive and positive feedback enhancing individual growth (e.g., enhancement of goal setting skills). Additionally, the awareness and acknowledgment of the negative possible selves identified as fears helped in the identification of what participants wanted to avoid in their future and enhancing balance.

Information from the tree was used to guide the group discussions. For example, the tree provided information regarding the level of support that participants perceive from their significant others and from school, as well as their confidence eliciting the support identified. This allowed the facilitator to help participants reflect on the role of school and its staff as well as to broaden their support network to include NGO's and other organisations.

## Participant Feedback

At the end of the follow-up session, the researcher left the room and a research assistant handed out the anonymous workshop feedback form (see Appendix N). Eighteen participants provided feedback; 100% would recommend the workshop to another student. As shown in Table 15, learning study management skills (e.g., taking breaks, rewarding themselves) as well as creating their Possible Selves Tree was reported as the most useful part of the workshop, followed by learning goal-setting skills and exploring their vision of themselves in the future.

Table 15

*Frequency with which the workshop components were reported by participants as the most important.*

Most Important Workshop Component	% Participants
Study Skills	28
Possible Selves Tree	28
Goal Setting Skills	19
Vision of the Future	10
Sausages Activity	5
Deep Breathing Exercise	5
Nothing (was important)	5
Total	100

These are some examples of participants' responses when asked about the most useful component of the workshop:

- ❖ "Our discussions about our future plans, it really made me think about what I'm gonna be and how I'm gonna live in the future."
- ❖ "Finding out what I wanted to do in the future."
- ❖ "The part where we drew a tree and wrote what expect out of ourselves, [as] siblings and other things."
- ❖ "Learning about rewards with goals and about being assertive, thinking about who I am."

About 38% of participants did not identify a workshop component that was the least useful, reporting that everything was relevant. Interestingly, some of the workshop components identified as the most important by some participants were also mentioned as the least important by others. As shown in Table 16, that was the case for the Sausages Activity, the Tree, the Goal Setting Skills and the Study Skills.

Table 16  
*Least useful components as reported by participants.*

Least Useful Workshop Component	% Participants
No Component Identified	39
Sausages Activity	17
Possible Selves Tree	11
Questionnaires	11
Study Skills	5.5
Goal Setting Skills	5.5
Workshop's Time and Day	5.5
Food Provided	5.5
Total	100

Understandably, some participants did not find the questionnaires administered useful. Explaining the purpose of the measures used at any time during the data collection time (i.e., from Time 1 to Time 3) would have compromised the outcome measures' validity by preventing participants from being blind to the specific hypotheses. Nevertheless, more time could have been spent debriefing on the purpose and rationale behind the different workshop components. In fact, 27% of the participants indicated their lack of understanding (e.g., "I didn't get the point of it") regarding the rationale behind some of the activities, such as the *Tree* and the sausages activity.

About 55% of the participants suggested changes to the workshop. These included: suggestions regarding process (e.g., get a better orientation about the material to be covered during the workshop, have more hands-on activities, and have more time to fill in the measures); content

(e.g., spend more time exploring how to structure free time and what to do when getting off track from their goals); and technical (e.g., have a template of the Tree instead of having to draw it, have different examples of other young people's Tree as a reference, and to have the opportunity to write about the reason behind the mood ratings in the diaries).

Interestingly, 100% of the High-School Engagement group and 61% of the Low-School Engagement group reported that the workshop had a positive impact on their school performance; 22% of the overall sample who attended the follow-up did not think the workshop had an impact in their school performance; and 5% did not answer that question. These are some of the responses that participants gave when they were asked whether the workshop had an impact on their school performance and if so, in what way:

- ❖ "I study better, I don't get distracted as much."
- ❖ "It has helped me spend time doing homework without being a tedious task."
- ❖ "Yes to do homework, I should do homework for a bit then something I like to do for a bit."
- ❖ "It helped me study and revise better, with the reward system."
- ❖ "It definitively helped me plan for next year something I would have no doubt struggled with."
- ❖ "Yes it has helped me to become more motivated in my studies, it has helped me see that yes all the work we are doing right now in school matters."
- ❖ "Yes because I think my future is now and what my goals/aims for the next year are."
- ❖ "It helped me study for my maths exam, I used the things we talked about to stay focused on studying."
- ❖ "Well I had my level 1 NCEA maths exam and we did that study thing, so that helped for that."

Eighty-eight percent of participants reported learning something important from the workshop, 5% reported not to have learnt "much", and 5% did not answer this question. These are some examples of what participants reported as what they learned the most from the workshop:

- ❖ "That what I am doing now has an enormous influence and effect on what I do in the future, and that I need to think about that."

- ❖ "...this workshop has helped me realised that the future is important."
- ❖ "Goal setting, I have realised I really want to travel and live overseas."
- ❖ "Set yourself long and short-term goals but make sure they are realistic and reward yourself."
- ❖ "If you work lots in goals you will have a long-term reward."
- ❖ "How to study effectively for exams and how to break goals into smaller goals."
- ❖ "How to plan time at home when I need to do some work."
- ❖ "Respect and goal setting."
- ❖ "Be respectful."
- ❖ "Not too much really. Just how to think more broadly."

The last question asked participants for further comments. Fifty-five percent of the participants took this opportunity to express their gratitude and appreciation to the researcher. The analysis of these responses suggests that it was important to participants to experience the workshop as "fun" and appreciate the facilitator's good communication skills and genuine interest in their wellbeing. These are some examples of their responses:

- ❖ "Thanks for the food, and the ideas."
- ❖ "Thanks for helping me achieve my goal of doing well in my exam."
- ❖ "It was a good experience and I had fun doing it."
- ❖ "I really enjoyed coming here because you were very supportive."
- ❖ "I think that you were really good like you explained everything really well so that we knew what to do and it just made everything much simpler."

## CHAPTER 5 : BRIEF CASE STUDIES

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This chapter describes the individual analysis of three participants, one participant per setting. These participants were selected on the following criteria: 1) they attended all the workshop sessions and the follow-up session; 2) their scores in the measures at Time 1 were within the three lowest total score values for their correspondent setting in at least two of the measures; 3) and the information about their life story was not easily identifiable. The names used in these case studies are pseudonyms and specific information about the participant has been omitted to protect their anonymity.

## Julia: Setting 1

Julia is a 15-year-old who self-identified as Assyrian. She lives with her parents and attends a girls-only school. She presented herself as a confident girl who would easily share her opinions in the group, and at the same time she was respectful of the opinions of others. She was cooperative and participative during the sessions. At times she was observed to be talkative and easily distracted, particularly by her interest in the work of one of her friends who she appeared to look up to. Although she did not appear a clique leader, she appeared well accepted by her peers and seemed to belong to one of the two cliques observed within this setting. Julia self-referred to participate in the workshop. She reported to be interested in taking the workshop because she didn't know what she wanted in the future.

During workshop's Phase 1 (i.e., Identity: Who am I?) Julia identified her strengths (e.g., her confidence, her ability to do school work and to relate to people) and difficulties (e.g., science, maths and sports). She also identified what she does for leisure (e.g., cooking, spending time with friends and going to the beach), and what interests her (e.g., music, fashion and helping others). When she saw the work of another participant who had identified her ethnic background and language as the area of interest, Julia mentioned this was also important to her. Like most of the participants in her setting, Julia indicated that she wanted to go to university.

In Phase 2 (Tree: What do I want to be?) Julia was encouraged to explore her view of herself in the future. As a person Julia wanted to spend more time with her family, for example helping her siblings with their homework. As a student she wanted to be trustworthy, perseverant and to pass the subjects she was enrolled in. In the area of interest Julia initially chose to explore fashion design and later on changed her mind and decided to explore nursing. Based on her first sketch, the feedback given to her encouraged her to be more specific about the things she could do to grow the different main branches, and to enlist her fears and supports. In her *tree* she identified her religious beliefs as a source of support, as well as her fears of failing, bad things happening, and giving up (see Appendix X).

In Phase 3 (Goal Setting: How do I get there?) Julia identified her goal of studying nursing, thus it was relevant to her to get her NCEA 1 qualification. Breaking this goal into small steps, she chose to work on passing that term's Maths subject. She was able to identify that having a good study place was important to her. In fact, she reported she used the library to study as she does not have a suitable study environment at home. She also identified that Facebook or any types of media were very distracting to her, and talked about the strategies she uses not to get distracted. She enlisted resources she uses when she feels "stuck", such as using Google to find information.

### Intervention evaluation

As shown in Figure 25, results from the measures of school engagement showed that Julia's scores increased between the time of the workshop's first session and the follow-up session conducted three months later. By the time the follow-up was conducted Julia's scores across the measures of school engagement and self-efficacy were above the mean for her setting at that point in time. The most noticeable improvement was observed in the GPSS scores, which by Time 3 (GPSS T3 = 60) were one standard deviation above the mean ( $M = 55.29$ ,  $SD = 3.45$ ) for her setting. Analysis of the individual item responses showed that by Time 3 Julia gave higher ratings to items regarding the importance of her long term plans, as well as feeling less sad and more appreciated at school.

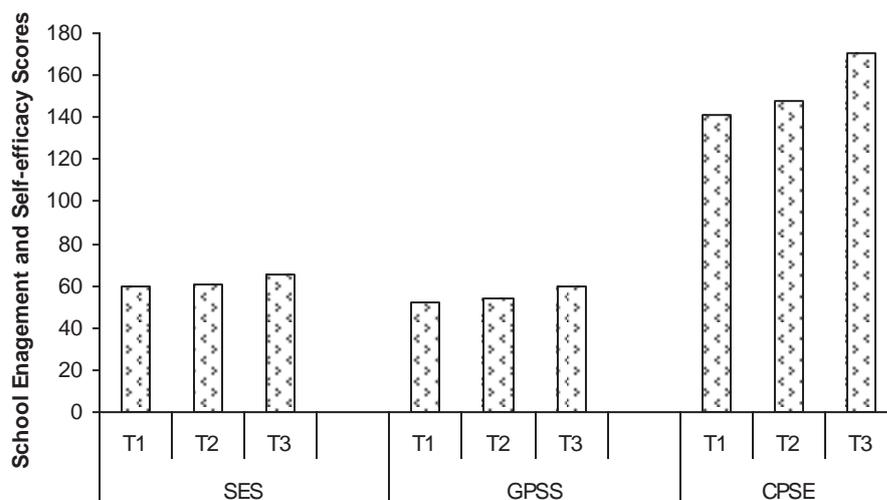


Figure 25. Julia's scores in the SES, GPSS and SE measures across time.

Similarly, the individual analysis of her responses in the CPSE scale showed that Julia felt more confident asking teachers and peers for support, and she felt more confident about studying despite distractions, concentrating in class, taking good notes, and arranging a place to study. These changes appeared to be reflected in her self-reported grades for Maths, which increased from *credit* to *merit* at the time of the follow-up. English self-reported grades continued to be at the *merit* range.

As shown in Figure 26, at the time of the follow-up the number of academic possible selves enlisted remained the same. Likewise the balance between negative and positive academic possible selves initially increased and then remained the same at the time of the follow-up. In this case out of the entire academic possible selves enlisted Julia only balanced one (e.g., expecting to pass and avoiding failing NCEA1). However, the number of strategies that Julia reported for each of the academic possible selves enlisted increased, along with the plausibility of these strategies. In fact, the plausibility of the strategies was coded at the second highest level possible as specified by Oyserman (2004). Some of these strategies included “not always sitting with friends”, “blocking them (friends) out while I am working”, “doing all my work”, “being good in class”.

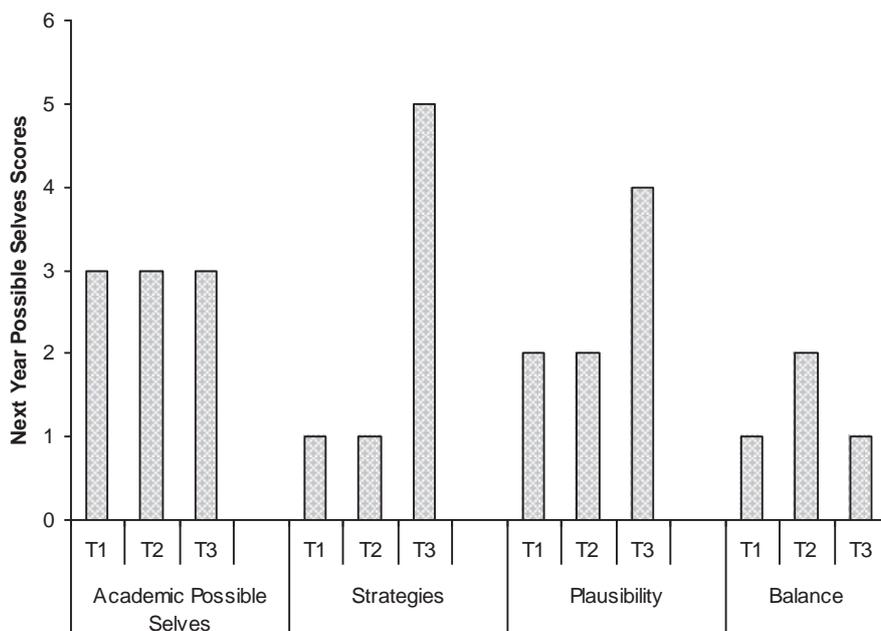


Figure 26. Julia's scores in the Next Year Possible Selves measure across time.

The findings from the NYPS measure indicated that Julia's goal setting ability improved. Although the number of academic possible selves remained the same, her ability to enlist the necessary strategies to help her attain those goals increased along with the quality of such strategies, which became more plausible.

## Discussion

Julia's scores showed improvement in school engagement, her view of her efficacy to navigate the academic challenges, and her ability to think of concrete reachable strategies to achieve her academic goals. There are different factors that might have contributed to the observed improvement. On one hand, Julia had a pre-workshop 'good enough' level of school engagement. While her score in the measures of school engagement and self-efficacy were below the mean for her setting, these scores were within one standard deviation from the mean for her setting. That is, her school engagement was not considered to be a concern. In addition, she was not failing Maths or English, and she identified doing school work as one of her strengths. Her initiative to self-refer to the workshop and ability to get within the first seven also shows a pre-existing level of motivation, and organisation skills. Thus, it is likely that Julia entered the workshop with a good level motivation, school engagement and goal-setting skills.

Nevertheless, it is possible that her work during the workshop has given Julia the opportunity to bridge her long-term goal (e.g., go to university) with her current situation (e.g., being a Year 10 student). This new awareness, combined with the enhancement of her goal setting skills and the mastery of those skills, might have impacted on her self-efficacy beliefs, reinforcing an existing school engagement and increasing her motivation towards school work (as reflected in her improvement in Maths, which she had identified as a personal difficulty).

On the other hand, it is possible that Julia's observed improvement was influenced by her positive engagement in the workshop with the group and with the facilitator. It is likely that this

positive interaction enhanced her social desirability performance whilst in the workshop and when filling in the measures. Given that all the measures are based on self-report, these findings are subject to the influence of social desirability, which remains a limitation of this study.

## Tama Setting 2

Tama is a 14-year-old of Samoan descent who attends a boys-only school. He presented himself as a cooperative, kind, friendly and playful boy. He did not belong to any of the cliques observed in his group. He was on his own. Nevertheless, he was observed to interact with others in a positive way, although initially some members of the group tended to make negative judgments about him. He was eager to participate and showed interest in the discussions throughout the sessions. Sometimes he struggled in understanding the task's instructions. However, he had no problems in asking the facilitator for clarification and he always completed his work within the allowed time. Tama self-referred to the workshop. He reported that his reasons for participating were to get information about motivation, to be "the best you can", and "to be enthusiastic".

During workshop's Phase 1 (Identity: Who am I?) Tama identified his strengths (e.g., sports, video games), difficulties (e.g., school, making friends, "getting along", telling the truth), and what interested him (e.g., guitar, cooking, Church, sports, video games, "girls"). Tama also indicated that feeling respected and accepted by his peers was very important to him. In addition, he reported he wanted to find a job to help his parents pay the rent. Nevertheless, Tama wanted to attain his NCEA 1 qualifications.

In Phase 2 (Tree: What do I want to be?) Tama was encouraged to explore his view of himself in the future in three different areas of his life (as a person, student, and in an area of interest). In the initial sketch one of the branches represented his view of himself as a guitar player, another one as a person, and the third one as a construction worker. Interestingly, in the "person" branch he included his goal of attaining NCEA qualifications. He was given the feedback of being more specific about what he could do to make the branches grow thicker, and to add his fears and supports. The following session Tama decided to start all over again and for his final tree he created a comprehensive tree (see Appendix Y), adding more branches to capture all of the important areas of his identity. In terms of his academic identity, Tama included his fear of not attaining NCEA 1 within a branch dedicated to fears, and in a separate branch he included his favourite subject: "wood

technology". He also identified his fears of hidings, snakes, and related to his root value of compassion he indicated his desire of "choosing the right path" (e.g., away from drugs, alcohol, and suicide). He did not identify his supports as an element independent from the tree. However, he identified family, his uncle, his teachers, coaches and friends as important for many of the branches and roots.

In Phase 3 (Goal Setting: How do I get there?) Tama identified his goal of being a guitar player. He identified some strategies, such as listening and learning from coaches and teachers. Tama also identified he wanted to attain his NCEA 1 qualification and change his attitude at school. Tama wanted to stop being "the clown" in the class and stop bullying the younger kids. Tama came up with the strategy of studying harder and going to the school counsellor. Similar to Tama, others in his group had long-term goals that appeared not to be aligned with the outcome offered by the school. Even though it was important for Tama to attain some NCEA qualifications, he did not have a clear bridge between those and his view of himself as a rugby or guitar player. Thus a group discussion was facilitated to elicit ideas of how NCEA qualifications might be relevant to them even when their long term goals are not academic in nature. Some in this group had the idea that they could easily find employment and do a "kick ass" interview, overcoming the lack of qualifications. The process of getting a job was discussed (e.g., preparing a CV, sending the CV, being selected for interviews), and they were given statistics of unemployment and its association with lack of qualifications. The advantages of cultivating only one skill (e.g., being good at physical work) in comparison with having more skills (e.g., also being good enough with numbers or office-like work) was also discussed in the light of future unforeseeable circumstances such as a physical injury.

### **Intervention evaluation**

At Time 1, Tama's scores in the measures of school engagement, self-efficacy and NYPS were equal to or below the mean for his setting, but within one standard deviation from the mean range. As shown in Figure 27, results from the SES measure of school engagement showed that Tama's

perception of engagement appeared to increase from Time 1 to Time 2 and then decrease by the time of the follow-up. Looking closely at his responses for individual items, it appeared that although Tama liked school more (i.e., the “like school” item was rated as sometimes at Time 1 and as quite often at Time 3), by Time 3 he was finding the work more challenging, as well as missing school, and skipping class more often. Interestingly, he reported to be less disruptive in class and persevering more.

As shown in Figure 27, the results from the GPSS measure of school engagement showed little variation across time. Interestingly, the analysis of individual item responses in this measure showed that from Time 1 to Time 2 Tama had changed his ratings for the items regarding his intention to finish school, the importance of school in his plans for the future, and his perception of whether staying at school was better than dropping out. At Time 2 Tama’s scores reflected a weak view of school as contributing towards his long-term plans. Nevertheless, by Time 3 his scores in these three items indicated that he thought school was important to attain his goals in the future and it was better than dropping out.

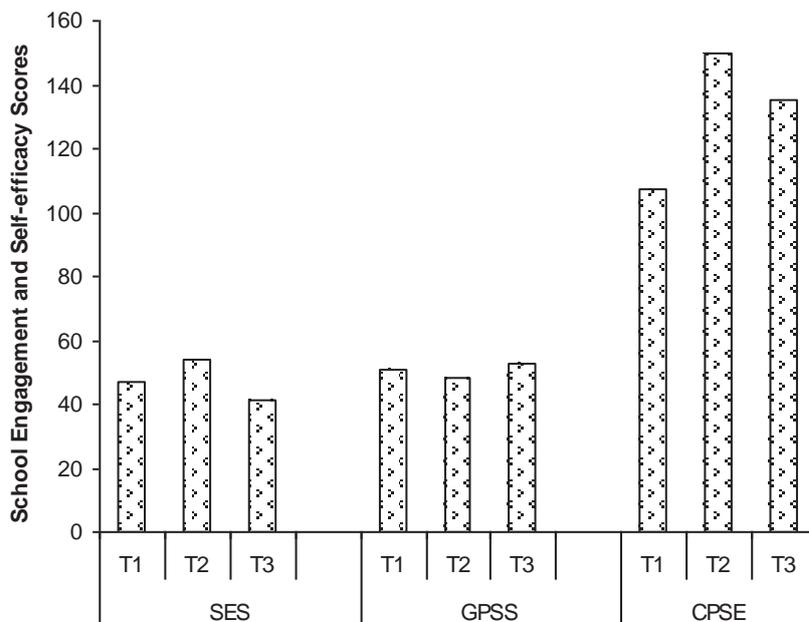


Figure 27. Tama’s scores in the SES, GPSS and SE measures across time.

In contrast, Tama's scores in the self-efficacy measure increased considerably from Time 1 to Time 2 (see Figure 27). Although there was a slight drop from Time 2 to Time 3, the score from Time 3 was still considerably higher than that at Time 1. The individual analysis of his responses indicated that by Time 3 Tama felt more confident in asking teachers to help him with school work and getting adults to help him with social problems. Moreover, he reported feeling more confident finishing school work, taking notes in class, organising school work and remembering information presented in class. This change appears to be reflected in Tama's self-reported grades that went from *no credit* to *credit* in Maths, and from *credit* to *merit* in English.

As shown in Figure 28, Tama's scores across most of the different domains of the NYPS measure showed consistent improvement over time. At Time 1, Tama was unable to enlist any academic goals or plausible strategies. By Time 3, he reported he wanted to "pass NECA 1" and stop being an "idiot" in class. His strategies included studying hard, and stop "talking back to teachers". In addition, by Time 2 there was a newly acquired balance between what he wanted to become and what he wanted to avoid, and this had been sustained at Time 3.

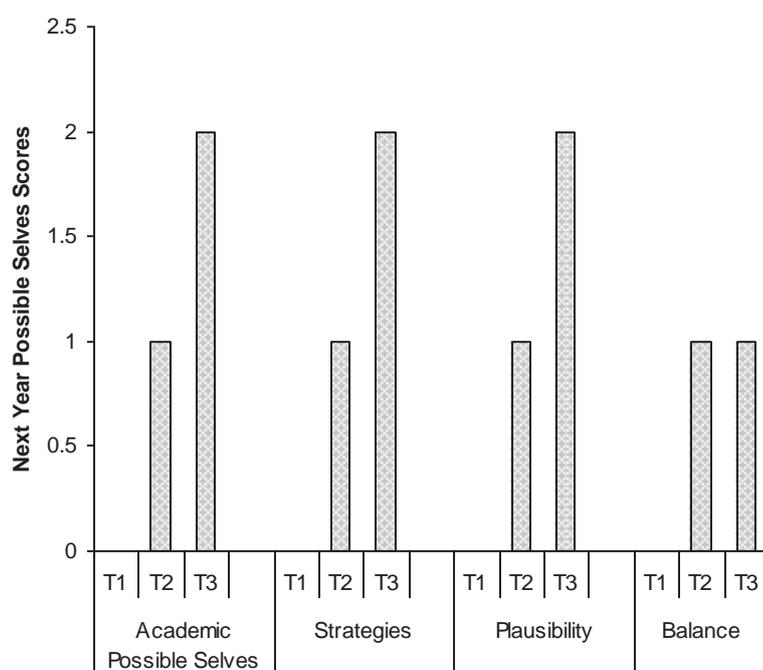


Figure 28. Tama's scores in the SES, GPSS and SE measures across time.

## Discussion

Tama's scores in the SES measure of school engagement showed an increase in negative behaviour (e.g., skipping class more often) from the time of the first workshop session to the follow-up. Nevertheless, given that the rest of the items in this measure indicated positive affect and academic commitment it is unclear whether such behavioural change accurately reflects his school engagement at the follow-up time. Further evidence of Tama's positive school engagement at follow-up were shown in his increased confidence enlisting social resources, his Maths and English self-reported grades improvement, and the slight improvement in his GPSS scores. Therefore, there seems to be little evidence that such behavioural change indicated a decreased school engagement. It is possible that changes in his behaviour (e.g., missing school, skipping class more often), and not enjoying school work as much when work was challenging, reflected the presence of a confounding variable such as having just gone through the exam period. The follow-up was conducted in mid-November, after the year exam period had finished.

It was interesting to find that the difference in Tama's overall score between Time 1 and Time 2 in the GPSS measure of school engagement was due to a change in his perception of the role school outcome could play in his long-term plans. Fortunately, this perception was not sustained and by Time 3 his scores in these three items had reversed. However, it is noticeable that, contrary to the objective of the workshop, when the workshop finished Tama did not perceive school would play an important role in the achievement of his long term plans. It is possible that the exercise of exploring his interests and eliciting his long-term goals had initially created a detachment from his current situation (e.g., a Year 10 student), and school. Although this was to be expected, it raises the question of whether the facilitator was skilled enough to be able to link Tama's future selves to the outcomes offered by school, one of the workshop's crucial objectives.

In absence of direct evidence to this question, such as Tama's explicit answer to this matter, it is possible to find indirect evidence by looking at Tama's improvement in the NYPS measure. At the time of the first workshop session Tama did not enlist any academic next-year possible selves.

His concerns for the future were to find a job to help his parents financially, play rugby and be a better role model. This is a good example of how the concept of achievement is different for each individual. In the case of Tama, achievement is related to a collective view. That is, Tama sees value in achieving a job because then he can help his family. Likewise, he is interested in being a role model to younger peers, and participating in a team sport such as rugby. As such, at that point in time getting good grades and achieving at school is not aligned with Tama's collectivistic values. While achieving *excellence* in a subject might be an important motivator on its own for some young people, that was not the case for Tama. Thus, part of the one-on-one work with him was around exploring how in the long-term attaining upper secondary school qualifications was going to enhance his opportunities of getting a better pay job and make a bigger contribution to his family. This reflection also provided an opportunity to assess the short-term (e.g., leave school early have a job now) versus the long-term rewards (e.g., attain school qualifications have a better job later).

At the time of the first workshop session Tama could not enlist strategies to attain his goals. However, by the time of the workshop's last session, Tama did not report considering leaving school early to get a job. Instead he identified one academic goal (complete NCEA 1), and could enlist strategies for his goals. Moreover, he had changed his focus towards his current situation at school (e.g., bullying others, being bullied, being the clown in class) and identified what he wanted to change (e.g., not to be bullied, not to bully younger boys, and not being the clown of the class). This progression in which Tama was able to enlist concrete strategies was amplified at follow-up.

Tama's reasons to participate in the workshop indicated he was looking for motivation. Overall, Tama's responses in the NYPS measure suggest an increased awareness of the importance of his current academic situation, and such it is possible that Tama is thinking more about it, and is able to plan towards his academic goals. It is possible that the saliency of his academic situation is due to the underlying belief that attaining school qualifications will play a positive role in his desired future. Yet it is not possible to rule out the influence of an unknown confounding variable. It is also uncertain whether the observed change was going to be enough to keep Tama motivated to stay in school. Based on Bertolino's (2010) recommendations in an attempt

to summarise the participants' work throughout the workshop and their change, I wrote a personal letter to all the participants, which was handed in along with their certificates of attendance. Appendix V shows the letter given to Tama.

### Anna: Setting 3

Anna is a 14-year-old of Māori and Pākehā descent who attends a mixed-sex school. She self-presented as a reserved and self-conscious girl who would avoid participating and sharing her opinions with the group. Her interactions in the group were restricted to those with whom she was friends with and her non-verbal body language indicated disapproval of other female members' opinions. Although she was cooperative, with the facilitator she was easily distracted from the task at hand and would rather pay attention to whatever her friend was doing. Thus she took longer than most people in the group to finish the tasks. Anna self-referred to participate in the workshop. She reported to be interested in taking the workshop because she wanted to develop new skills, to do something she has not done before, and to help the facilitator.

During workshop's Phase 1 (Identity: Who am I?) Anna identified her strengths (e.g., creativity), difficulties (e.g., maths), and what interested her (e.g., music, modelling). She also identified that family was very important to her. Like most of the participants in her setting, Anna indicated that she wanted to go on to attain NCEA 3 qualifications.

In Phase 2 (Tree: What do I want to be?) Anna was encouraged to explore her view of herself in the future in three different areas of her life (as a person, as a student, and in an area of interest). As a sibling Anna wanted to help her siblings when in need, spend more time together, and be a "good sibling". As a student she wanted to be able to manage time, and to pass and get NCEA 3 qualifications. In the area of interest Anna's initial sketch goal was to be well-known as an artist. Based on her first sketch, the feedback given to her encouraged her to be more specific about the things she could do to grow the different main branches, and to enlist her fears and supports. In her *tree* she identified her family, friends and pets as a source of support. She also identified her fears of getting behind in her work, and not having strong enough bonds with her family (see Appendix Z).

In Phase 3 (Goal Setting: How do I get there?) Anna identified her goal of attaining NCEA 3 qualifications. She identified some strategies such as attending class and managing her time better by using a diary to keep track of what she needs to do. Anna also identified her goal of doing

modelling to become “rich”. Thus it was relevant to her to work on her confidence, take modelling courses, and take drama at school. Unfortunately, the facilitator failed to encourage Anna to elaborate further in identifying small steps to take (e.g., finding out the requirements for entering the drama class at her school), difficulties to anticipate, and resources to be utilised when in need. Anna identified money as a reward; however, she was not encouraged to identify other rewards. Moreover, the facilitator failed to bridge Anna’s modelling view of herself in the future with the goal of attaining NCEA 3 qualifications and her current situation as a Year 10 student.

### Intervention evaluation

As shown in Figure 29, results from the measures of school engagement showed that Anna’s scores remained the same across time. Anna’s self-efficacy scores dropped at the time of the workshop’s last session. However, by the time of the follow-up the score had gone back to her baseline value. Likewise, there was no change in the self-reported grades for Maths and English, which remained in *merit* range.

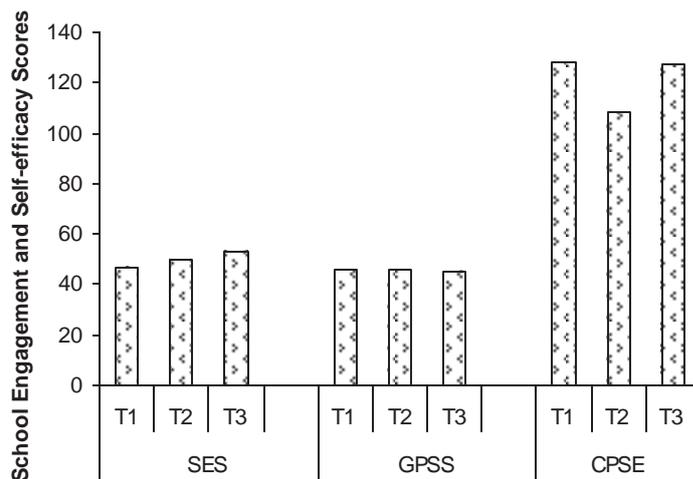


Figure 29. Anna’s scores in the SES, GPSS and SE measures across time.

As shown in Figure 30, Anna's scores in the NYPS measure also show no change at all across time for the number of academic possible selves, strategies and the quality of the strategies enlisted. In contrast, the balance of having a positive possible self matched with a negative one increased from the time of the first workshop session to the time of the last workshop session and such change remained through to the follow-up.

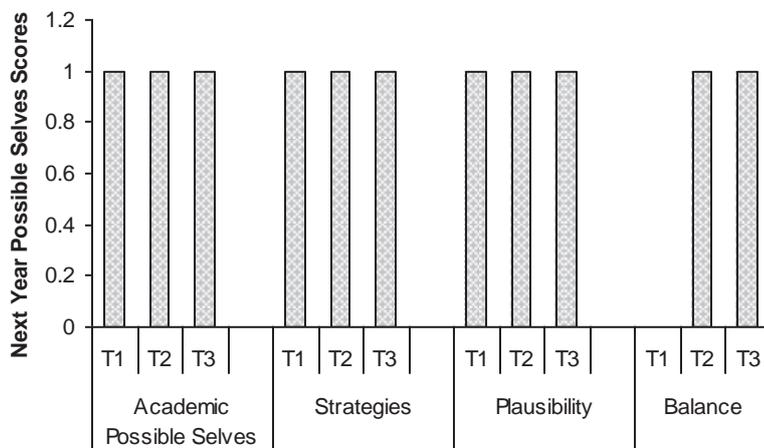


Figure 30. Anna's scores in the Next Year Possible Selves measure across time.

## Discussion

Anna's overall scores did not show change across time. There are different factors that might have contributed to these results. At the time of the first workshop session, Anna's scores on the school engagement and self-efficacy measures were below the mean across the three measures. However, these scores were within one standard deviation from the mean. Thus, it could be inferred that although Anna's scores on the school engagement and self-efficacy measures were lower than most of the people in her setting they were within the average range for that group. That is, her engagement did not appear to be of concern at that point in time. In fact, her scores on the measures of school engagement remained lower than the mean, but within the average range from the baseline to the follow-up when compared to others in her setting. Interestingly, her scores in the

measure of self-efficacy showed a significant drop from Time 1 to Time 2, going from being within one standard deviation to being one standard deviation below the mean. Later, at Time 3, Anna's score in the measure of self-efficacy had returned to being in the average range.

The self-efficacy measure assesses the perceived ability to utilise resources, learn different subjects, and put into practice self-regulation skills to perform better at school. It is possible that the significant drop in her self-efficacy scores is related to the content of the workshop, in particular the last sessions focused on enlisting strategies for goal attainment. Although the participants work on their own goals, they were exposed to the skills and strategies that other group members utilise. Across the sessions she sat and worked closely to her female friend, another participant whose academic performance had recently being praised by school staff. Thus, it is possible that, for Anna, knowing how others work towards their goals, particularly the academic ones, created an anxiety when comparing it to her existing strategies. Her comparison with others' work might have been reflected in her self-efficacy beliefs at the time of the last workshop session, and then subsided three months later by the time of the follow-up.

Similarly, Anna's scores in the possible selves measure showed little change over time. By Time 2, Anna was able to enlist matching positive and negative possible selves. Research findings suggest that having a balance between positive and negative expected possible selves enables awareness of what can help or obstruct goal attainment. Thus, this awareness might aid Anna to make choices that take her away from the unwanted goal and closer to the wanted one.

Anna expressed that one of her reasons to participate in the workshop was to "help" the facilitator in her research, and she initially made efforts to relate to the facilitator (e.g., complimenting her jewellery). Unfortunately, by the end of the workshop rapport had not been sustained and there was an evident rupture in the relationship with the facilitator. This was evidenced by her comments made in front of the research assistant who managed the workshop's feedback (e.g., criticising and laughing at the letter written to her by the facilitator).

It is possible that the rupture of the relationship was precipitated by the facilitator's inability to conduct one-on-one work with her, at her pace. Anna was frequently behind in her work, often

distracted with her female friend, and the facilitator found herself pushing her to finish within the time allowed for the workshop. In contrast with other settings, the workshop in this setting happened during lunch time, which put more pressure into finishing the activities on time to allow participants to be punctual for their following class. In addition, Anna made faces or judgements on another female participant on more than one occasion during the workshop. As a result, the facilitator emphasised the rules of respect more than once, referring to Anna's inappropriate comments or behaviour, possibly making Anna feel antagonised by the facilitator.

Consequently, this rupture in the relationship and lack of progress observed with Anna could have been prevented if more one-on-one time to work with her had been available. In the case of Anna's workshop I was the only facilitator and found it difficult to spend enough time with each participant, making sure they understood the task. The presence of a co-facilitator could have enabled one-on-one work with Anna. Moreover, the presence of a co-facilitator would create an opportunity to reflect more on Anna's behaviour towards other group members. Thus, it would have been helpful to reflect with the group on the group dynamics, and to repair the sometimes inevitable disruptions in the facilitator-facilitatee alliance.

## CHAPTER 6 : POSSIBLE SELVES WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

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In this study I adapted and delivered a possible selves-based intervention to increase motivation towards school. The intervention targeted 14 to 15 year-old students attending mainstream high school education in New Zealand. In this chapter I will discuss the quantitative and qualitative findings from the Possible Selves Workshop which have been presented in Chapters 3 to 5. In the following chapter, Chapter 7, I will present the overall conclusions which integrate the findings from the two studies that compose this research.

### **Primary Findings of the Possible Selves Workshop**

While it was expected that the workshop would benefit all the participants regardless of their initial level of motivation, those who scored highly in the measures of school engagement and self-efficacy did not have far to move in some of the variables being measured. Due to ceiling effects, the participants of the workshop were divided into High-School Engagement and the Low-School Engagement groups, based on their school engagement and self-efficacy scores at Time 1. The pre, post, and follow-up analysis of the data obtained by means of quantitative measures indicated an increment in the balance between participants' negative and positive possible selves for both groups. In addition, for the Low-School Engagement group, the analysis revealed a significant increment with a large effect size in the participants' number of academic expected possible selves. Moreover, the quality of the strategies (i.e., plausibility) enlisted by these participants also improved significantly by the follow-up time. As such, the workshop enhanced participants' possible selves, but tended to do so most for those who were less motivated to begin with.

Although the positive changes observed in the possible selves were not reflected in changes in the quantitative measures of school engagement, self-efficacy and self-reported grades at the follow-up, there was a significant increment with a large effect size on the study-time for the participants whose possible selves changed positively (e.g., more academic possible selves, more

plausible strategies, better balanced). The qualitative analysis of the participants' feedback further supported this finding. Sixty-one percent of the participants in the Low-School Engagement Group provided concrete examples of how the workshop had impacted positively on their school performance. In particular, participants reported increased confidence doing homework and studying due to a perceived increased ability to focus and persevere.

The qualitative analysis of the intervention revealed that setting up the group's ground rules was the foundation to create a supportive and safe environment. In this study, the rules proposed by the participants reflected the particular needs of the group (e.g., respect instead of "bullying") within a specific context (e.g., the particular interaction style within the school). The facilitator's reflection and ability to attune to this information was observed as important in the management of group dynamics and process. As such, the analysis of the participants' feedback suggested that overall participants felt safe, and that they enjoyed the workshop. Interestingly, all of the participants who attended the follow-up session reported they would recommend the workshop to other students. Moreover, being supportive and having ability to communicate ideas effectively were the facilitator's characteristics that participants identified and reported as contributing to the workshop's positive outcome.

In addition, the Possible Selves Tree was found to be a good tool to identify and enhance adaptive possible selves. This self-reflection process created opportunities for disclosure, exploration, rapport building, and involvement. Through this activity participants reflected on what is important to them, what they want in their future, creating meaning and purpose. Furthermore, it created an opening to collaboratively explore the pathway to work towards their desired possible selves. By means of goal setting skills training and psycho-education participants learnt about the effect of incentivising the future and disconfirming unrealistic pathways of goal attainment.

For example, in their feedback participants reported that they became more aware of the importance of prospective thinking. One participant reported to realised that "... what I am doing now has an enormous influence and effect on what I do in the future, and that I need to think about that". Another participant reported gaining awareness about his or her own possible selves "...I have

realised I really want to travel and live overseas". Subsequently, some of them also reported gaining knowledge to implement a pathway to attain their desired possible selves, for instance one participant mentioned he or she could now "Set yourself long and short-term goals but make sure they are realistic and reward yourself." In consequence, some of the participants reported to have implemented the strategies and found them useful to attain their goals: "It [the workshop] helped me study and revise better, with the reward system", "I study better, I don't get distracted as much". Finally, some participants reported being able to see the link between their current situation as students and their desired future, one of them reported "... it [the workshop] has helped me to become more motivated in my studies, it has helped me see that yes all the work we are doing right now in school matters."

The different components of the Possible Selves Tree were examined. The roots added information about participants' identity such as ethnicity and spirituality. The fears provided important information about their negative possible selves (i.e., what they want to avoid being). For instance, more than half of the participants in the Low-School Engagement group feared failing school. Thus, the fears were a useful way of eliciting participants' negative possible selves and subsequently enhancing balance with matching positive possible selves. Likewise, the student branch provided information regarding participants' self-awareness and knowledge of the in-school and out-of-school behaviour that works for or against their achievement. That is, by means of guided discovery it was evident that participants were aware of what they needed to do or avoid doing to enhance their performance. Such information was used to provide the participants with enhancement of goal-setting and problem-solving skills. Thus, participants used their self-knowledge to enlist concrete realistic self-regulatory strategies that they could implement. Rather than being suggested or imposed by the facilitator, participants had the opportunity to create their own strategies.

Finally, most participants elicited family and friends as support, and a few enlisted teachers and school. Notably, none of the students mention the resources and support they might be able to access in the community through non-government organisations that work with youth. This finding highlights the need to make the existing resources within the community more approachable and reachable for adolescents.

The reflections from the case studies revealed that while working in a group format is useful, monitoring individual progress is essential. Members of the group shared certain strengths and challenges, but they also had individual needs that needed to be recognised and addressed by the facilitator. In Julia's case these needs seemed to have been met throughout the intervention. Similarly, Tama's possible selves and strategies improved along with his self-reported grades (e.g., from no credit to credit in Maths). However, in the case of Anna, for whom no change was observed, it is possible that some of her needs had not been addressed effectively during the workshop.

### **Limitations of this Study**

There are a number of limitations of this study. First, having a small sample size compromised the statistical power of the analyses. Second, the analyses are based in correlations and lacked of a control group which does not allow for explanations of causality between the data obtained prior and after the intervention. In this study it is not possible to assess the extent to which social desirability, the relationship with the facilitator, and the weight of each of the intervention components had on the participants' response to the intervention.

Third, it will be important to assess the efficacy of the outcome measures selected. Data obtained by means of self-report measures of school engagement, self-efficacy and academic performance contradicts the students' reported study-time in their diaries, as well as their school performance and self-efficacy beliefs improvement as reported in the feedback forms. There are different factors that might be contributing to such discrepancy. First, there is a question of the sensitivity level of the selected measures of school engagement and self-efficacy. Were the measures of school engagement and self-efficacy sensitive enough to capture change over a relatively short period of time (e.g., two months)? The School Engagement Scale and the Children's Perceived Self-Efficacy scale had been validated in large samples in previous studies. However, their use has been used in cross-sectional studies measuring students' perception at one given point in time. That is, to my knowledge these measures have not been used as a measure of change. Likewise, the Goals and Perception of School Scale has not been validated in a large sample, nor

has it been validated as a measure sensitive to change in time. In fact, the measure of self-efficacy in the instructions does not direct participants to reflect on their responses when given a specific time frame, which could potentially invite a reflection of historical self-efficacy perception. In contrast, the two measures of school engagement have written instructions directing participants' responses to reflect on their experience over the last two weeks. However, it is possible that participants need a stronger verbal reminder, emphasising the need to report recent rather than overall perceptions.

It is possible then, that the selection of the outcome measures was not ideal for this study. Fortin and colleagues (2006) found that scores in a measure of depression (i.e., the Beck Depression Inventory) was useful to identify at-risk students. A measure of depression (i.e., the Beck Youth Inventory) had also been thought to be useful in this study to identify change. However, this idea was discarded by the Ethics Committee, which feared the use of a clinical tool such as the Beck Youth Inventory in a research project with adolescents younger than 16 years. Future research in this area should, nevertheless, push for the use of such tools as they have been extensively validated and are symptom-focused, which makes them sensitive to change over short periods of time.

Second, using self-reported academic performance is subject to social desirability (e.g., over-reporting or under-reporting to meet external expectations), and it is dependent on the participants' knowledge of their own performance. For example, in this study different schools and teachers had different forms of evaluation which were timed differently, according to the setting. Although the follow-up measures were taken right after the end-of-year exams, it is possible that some of the participants had not received their official grades at the time of the follow-up. While the participants might have perceived improvement in their performance, which they reported it in the feedback form, their grades might not have changed yet, and so they did not report them. Thus, it would better to follow participants throughout the school year and use participants' actual grades as opposed to self-reported grades in the analysis of change after the intervention.

Although the Possible Selves Workshop was found feasible overall, there are a series of modifications that could enhance its implementation. Three areas of improvement were identified: (a)

increase the number of sessions, (b) fixed number of participants per group, and (c) increase the number of facilitators per group. On one hand, it would be beneficial having at least two more workshop sessions. This would allow for more transparency regarding the purpose of each activity, something some participants reported as important. Moreover, having more sessions would provide more time to work on the Possible Selves Tree and to re-visit it in the final workshop sessions to incorporate new ideas or learning acquired throughout the workshop (e.g., the support they can access from specific NGO's). Having more sessions would also allow the facilitator to expand on the group discussions regarding the role of school outcome on their future long term plans. On the other hand, the optimum group size of seven to eight participants should be respected and the workshop should be facilitated by at least two facilitators. This will provide better opportunities to monitor and reflect on group process and dynamics. For example, facilitators would be able to have a deeper reflection after each session and be able to better attend to the specific group's needs. Having more time will also provide an opportunity to approach participants with quality one-on-one time during the workshop to provide specific feedback.

## CHAPTER 7 : OVERALL CONCLUSION

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Although access to education is young person's right, the rates of school disengagement in industrialised nations such as New Zealand continues to be a matter of concern. Research that provides new information on how the schools and government departments can reach out to those students at risk is needed. In order to modify a student's school disengagement pathway it is crucial to identify students at risk and intervene. Historically, tools of school engagement have focused on problematic behaviour. The limitation of using tools based on that approach is that they only capture a small percentage of the disengaged students. School drop-out has been conceptualised as a pathway in which problematic behaviour signals the highest drop-out risk, and consequently the most difficult point to intervene. The typology of disengaged students indicates that those at risk are a heterogeneous group, where about 50% would not misbehave, are liked by their teachers but will still drop out. Thus, by focusing on problematic behaviour, the current tools of school engagement are identifying only a small part of the at-risk population.

In the first study an alternative measure of school engagement was developed. This measure focuses on students' view of their future, the role that they perceive school has on it, and their perception of school. In this study, it was found that participants' short-term future perception is restricted to the current in-school situation while their perception of the long-term future lies in what happens after high school. Moreover, participants who reported having education-related goals (e.g., "I intend to get NCEA level 3") were more likely to have higher school engagement scores. Thus, these findings support the idea that school engagement is enhanced by the alignment between students' personal goals, possible selves (the students' vision of themselves in the future) and the outcomes offered by school. That is, school engagement is more likely to occur when the outcomes offered by school (in terms of skills or qualifications) match with what the student expects and hopes to achieve in the future. In addition, those participants who reported short-term academic goals were less likely to report in-school misbehaviour (a previously reported as a predictor of school

disengagement). Therefore, without having to ask about school performance and in-school behaviour the Goals and Perception of School Scale is a measure of school engagement which can be aid the early identification of those students who are disengaging from school.

Findings from Study 1 revealed the importance of promoting students' visions of their future. Thus, in a subsequent study a possible selves intervention was adapted and delivered as a school workshop. Developing an effective intervention to increase student motivation towards school is not going to be resolved in one or two studies. There is not going to be one intervention to fit the needs of such a heterogeneous group of young people. Ideally, in the near future a repertoire of intervention programmes will be available to the schools to be used as needed. Sadly, the quest for the development of such interventions and assessing their efficacy has taken a long time.

Study 2 aimed to contribute towards the construction of such a repertoire of interventions. The Possible Selves Workshop is a feasible brief intervention, targeting 14 to 15 year-olds and delivered in a group format over four to six 60-minute weekly sessions, that targets adolescents' awareness and amplification of what they want for their future. This intervention offers an opportunity to explore possible selves, which is followed by goal-setting skills training, psycho-education and problem solving skills training. By specifically addressing academic possible selves, the intervention provides an environment to discuss the relevance of school outcome in the students' vision of their future. The results of this study revealed an improvement on participants' academic possible selves and plausibility of the strategies being enlisted to pursue the academic possible selves. This change was particularly noticeable in participants who were initially less motivated towards school. In addition, for the participants whose possible selves improved, the time spent on homework or studying also improved, and reported greater perceived efficacy and endurance on these activities.

This study identified some key process variables that contributed to this improvement. Participants reported that it was important for them to experience the workshop as a safe and enjoyable activity in which the facilitator was supportive of them and able to communicate ideas effectively. The acquisition of goal-setting skills, self-care and immediate reward bias awareness, were identified by participants as key workshop components having a positive effect on their school

performance. Moreover, participants reported having a new awareness of the relevance of their current decisions and choices in the light of what they envision for their future.

Although the workshop showed promise as an intervention I was not able to quantitatively demonstrate that the improvement in participants' possible selves translates into greater school engagement (as measured by the scales utilised) and performance (i.e., better grades). Therefore, while this study contributes to the existing knowledge in the areas of identification and prevention of school disengagement, more research is needed to further assess the efficacy of the proposed intervention.

It might seem an easier option to give up on those students who disengage from school. But, as a former teacher and as a clinical psychologist, I believe that it is the students who do not seem to find the purpose of staying at school or the relevance of the school experience, who are most in need of the acknowledgement, effort and energy of the adults around them. Some might argue that this requires more research and more financial resources invested in them. I argue that this is not only worth it, but that it is also a social obligation. The lack of resources might be a reason why more interventions have not been researched and implemented before. I believe that, in the long term, investing in young people's education is highly remunerated in the form of a healthier society.

One of the participants of this research, Tama, was thinking of dropping out from school to help his parents pay the rent. When, as a society, we do not invest in young people's education in order to instead spend on attracting investment, we are dropping out from education with a temporary illusion of helping but with a long-term path of stagnation and high unemployment rates. If we want young people like Tama to stay in school, we as a society need to commit to staying with schools. As researchers, we have the commitment to keep investigating and contributing with knowledge and application towards the resolution of this complex problem of school disengagement.

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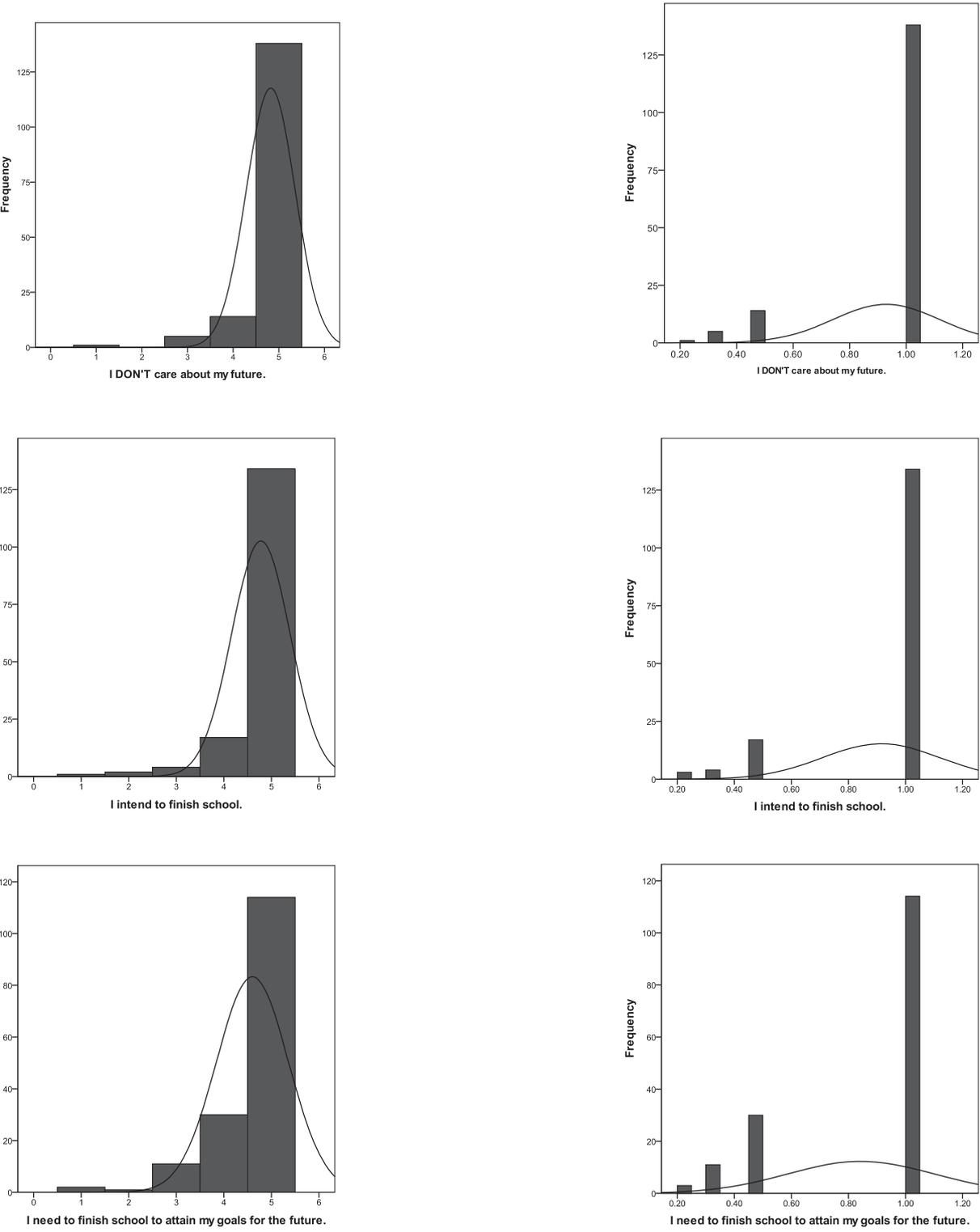
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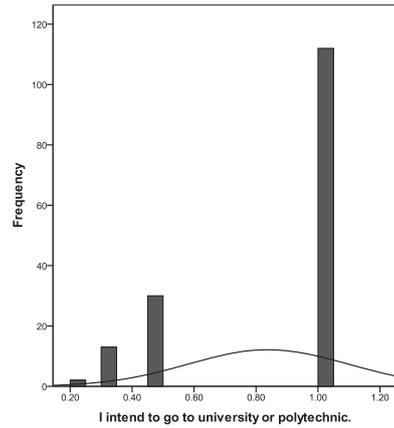
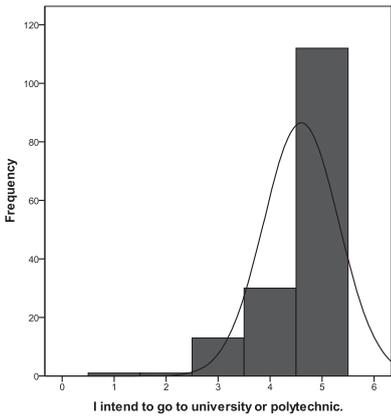
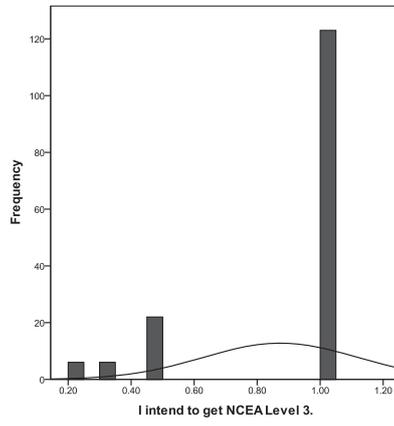
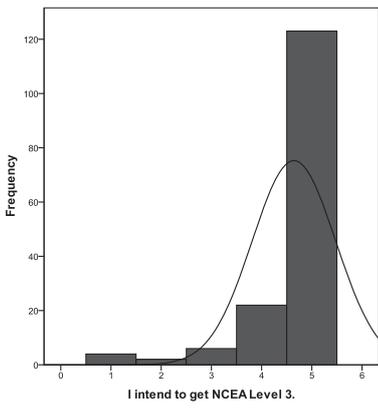
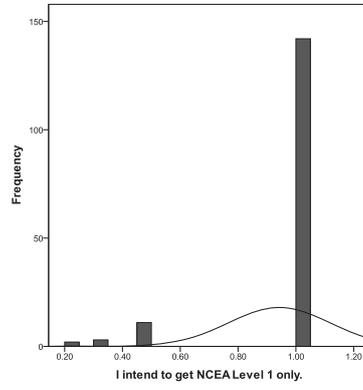
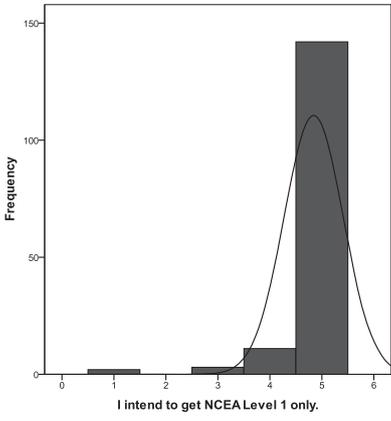
## APPENDICES

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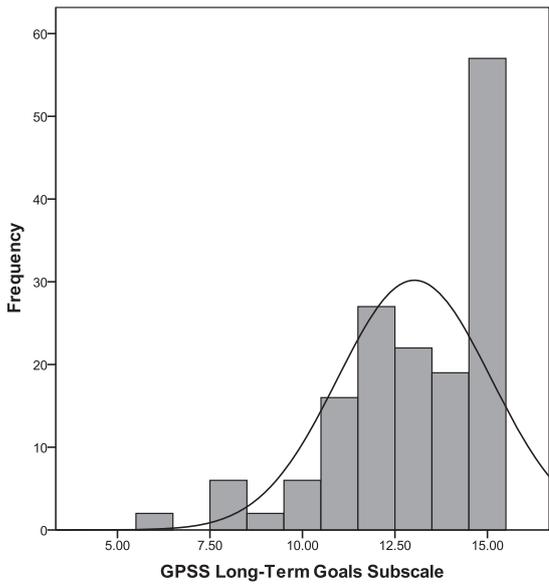
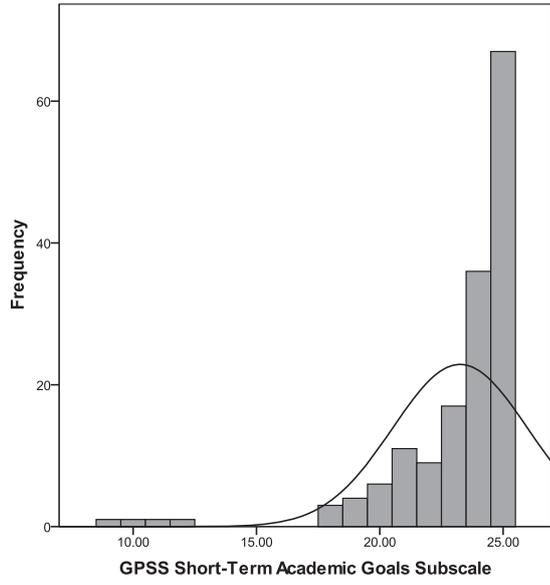
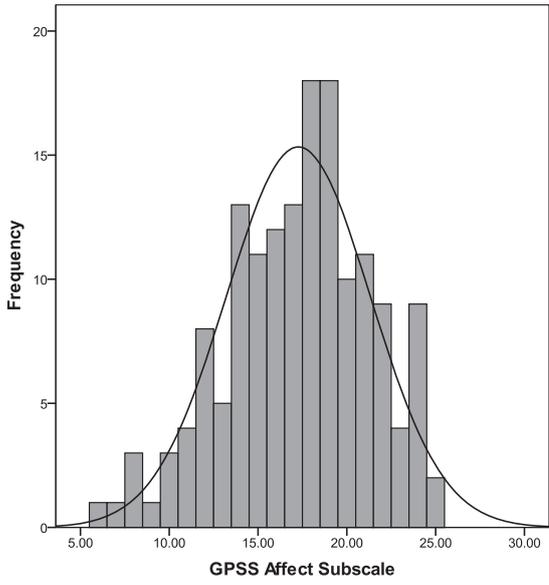
Appendix A: Tables and Figures

Figure 31 Histograms of the GPSS Items Before and After Transformation.





**Figure 32. Histograms of the GPSS Subscales**



## Appendix B Information Sheet Study 1



### Goals and Perceptions of School Questionnaire

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#### Information Sheet for Participants

Who is doing this research?

The research is being conducted through Massey University by Lucia Munoz (B. Sc. Biol, B.Sc. Hons. Psych., GradDip). Lucia was a high school teacher and now she is a doctoral student in the Clinical Psychology Programme at Massey University (New Zealand). She is working with her supervisor Professor Ian Evans to investigate about young people's goals, career objectives and what they think about school.

What is this research about?

They have put together some questions that would provide information about what New Zealand young people think about school and their future. This study has been advertised in Facebook and requires the participation of 150-200 young people (16-18 years old) to analyse how good the chosen questions are in gathering the intended information.

Who can take part in this research?

You are invited to participate in this study if:

- You are aged 16-18 years old AND
- You are currently enrolled in high school AND
- You feel confident communicating in English AND
- You are currently living in New Zealand.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to participate, you will be shown a questionnaire that will take approximately 15-20 minutes to fill in. Your participation is completely anonymous. That is, your name and contact details are not required. If after completing the questionnaire you decide to take part in the ballot to win an iPod, you will be asked to provide your email or mobile details in the case you win the prize (1 iPod). However, your email or mobile details will be filled in a completely different webpage ensuring that there is no way in which your answers could be linked to your identity. If after reading or filling in the questionnaire you feel uncomfortable or the need to talk to someone please call Youthline free land line 0800 37 66 33, free TXT 234, or email: [talk@youthline.co.nz](mailto:talk@youthline.co.nz).

What will happen to my responses?

The responses from this survey will be analysed by the researcher and supervisor only. Upon completion of the study, the results will be published as part of the dissertation thesis and will be possibly published in an academic journal. The data of this study will be kept safely in the supervisor's computer and destroyed after five years. If you would like to receive a summary of the research once is completed please send an email to [Lucia.MunozLarroa@gmail.com](mailto:Lucia.MunozLarroa@gmail.com) (subject heading "send me results"). Otherwise please feel free to contact the researcher (details provided below).

What are my rights as a participant?

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study (anytime up until you have completed all questions in the study);
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

It is important for you to know that completion of the questionnaire implies consent.

What do I do now?

If you are happy to continue, please read your rights below and Click through to the survey pages.

Contact Information

#### Researcher

Lucia Munoz Larroa  
 CHERUBS, K1,  
 School of Psychology  
 Massey University  
 PO Box 756  
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#### Supervisors

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**Te Kunenga  
 ki Pūrehuroa**

**Massey University School of Psychology – Te Kura Hinengaro Tangata**

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This project has been reviewed and approved by the  
 Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 10/50.  
 If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact  
 Professor Julie Boddy , Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee:  
 Southern A, telephone 06 350 5799 x 2541,  
 email [humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz)

## Appendix C Facebook Add Study 1 (text only version)

### **Goals and Perceptions of School Questionnaire**

*How do you like school? What are your plans for the future?*

*I am a doctorate student at Massey University and my research project looks at what New Zealand students think of school and their future. If you live in New Zealand, you are between 16 and 18 years old, and you are currently enrolled in high school then you are eligible to participate in this survey. The questionnaire will take 15-20 minutes approximately and your answers are completely **anonymous**.*

Answer some questions about your school experience and in appreciation for your participation you can enter a ballot to win an iPod.

Click this link to participate in the survey: [link](#)

**Appendix D Descriptive statistics of the Goals and Perception of School Subscales (13-item scale)**

Subscale	Items	<i>M(SD)</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Affect	5	17.27 (4.06)	-.34	-.21	.84
Short-Term Academic Goals	5	23.25 (2.74)	-2.91	10.68	.79
Long-Term Goals	3	13.03 (2.08)	-1.06	.86	.72

## Appendix E Individual Information Sheet Study 2



# Massey University

School of Psychology  
Private Box 756  
Wellington  
Tel 64 4 8015799  
Fax 64 4 8012692

### What do I want to be and how do I get there: A possible selves workshop

#### INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

#### Who is doing this Research?

The research is being conducted through Massey University by Lucia Munoz (B. Sc. Biol, B.Sc. Hons. Psych., GradDip) Lucia was a high school teacher and now she is a doctoral student in the Clinical Psychology Programme at Massey University (New Zealand). She is working with her supervisor Professor Ian Evans to investigate about young people's goals, career objectives and what they think about school.

#### What is this research about?

This research project consists in providing a four-session after school workshop to seven Year 10 students in which we will be exploring their career goals and how to start working towards them.

#### Who can take part in this research?

You are invited to participate in this study if:

- You are a Year 10 student AND
- You feel confident communicating in English AND
- You have written consent from your parent/guardian AND
- You are a New Zealand resident or citizen.

The first seven students that contact me will be invited to participate in this study. Remember that your participation in this study requires written consent from your parents/guardians.

#### Where will the workshop take place?

The workshop will take place at the school grounds and consists of four sessions of 50 minutes each.

#### What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to participate, I will assign a number to you (to keep your identity confidential) and you will be asked to attend to the four workshop sessions. In order to be able to see if you notice changes after the workshop, you will be asked to answer some questionnaires in the first and fourth sessions of the workshop. Two months later you will be asked to answer the same questionnaires one more time. The questionnaires will ask about your school experience (emotions towards school, behaviour in class and academic commitment) as well as asking about your goals (short and long term) and your beliefs around your ability to do school work.

In addition, you will be asked to keep a brief diary about how you been feeling at school for eight weeks, and I will call you once a week and ask you one question.

In the diary, you will be asked to only fill in 4 lines: Mood rating (1-10), Today school was...., Today I felt..., I have spent ..... hours doing homework/studying today. To keep it confidential I will

provide you with stamped envelopes so that you can post the diary to me weekly at your convenience.

### **Who else is will be involved?**

It is unlikely, but if involvement in this project causes you to be uncomfortable or upset, the school counsellor has agreed to be available for the provision of on-going support.

### **Why would I want to take part in this workshop?**

- It will be worthwhile. You will have the opportunity to explore your goals and find ways to start working towards them. In addition, the information gathered from all the students who take part will give us an idea of what Year 10 students in New Zealand want for their future. This will be useful for improving school programmes to make school better for you and other teenagers.
- In appreciation for your time and participation in this study you will receive a \$40 Warehouse Pre-paid Card upon completion of the four workshop sessions, and an additional \$40 Warehouse Pre-paid Card one month later when you complete the follow-up questionnaires (\$80 in total in the form of 2 \$40 Warehouse Pre-paid Cards).

### **What will happen to my responses?**

Your participation and identity will remain confidential which means that your responses in the questionnaires and diary cannot be linked to your name, and your name will not be used at all.

The responses from this study will be analysed only by the researcher and supervisor. Upon completion of the study, the results will be published as part of the dissertation thesis and will be possibly published in an academic journal.

The data of this study will be kept safely in the supervisor's computer and destroyed after five years. If you would like to receive a summary of the research by email once is completed please indicate so by ticking the appropriate box in the consent form. Otherwise please feel free to contact the researcher (details provided below).

### **What are my rights as a participant?**

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Pass on answering any particular question.
- Leave and stop your participation from the study (at any time during participation).
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation.
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used.
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

### **What do I do now if I want to participate?**

1. To participate in this study please give your parents or guardians the information package (that includes an information sheet for parents and the consent forms to be signed).
2. Provide the (appropriate school staff e.g., secretary or counsellor) with the consent form signed by your parents as soon as possible. Remember that only the first seven Year 10 students who bring back the consent form signed by a parent or guardian will be able to participate.

### **Researcher:**

Lucia Munoz Larroa.

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PO Box 756, Wellington

Land line (04) 801 57 99 Extension 62324

Mobile 027 489 30 72

Email: [Lucia.MunozLarroa@gmail.com](mailto:Lucia.MunozLarroa@gmail.com)

**Supervisor:**

Professor Ian Evans, School of Psychology, Massey University, PO Box 756, Wellington, (04) 801 57 99, Extension 6754.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 11/30. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact A/Prof Hugh Morton, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A telephone 06 350 5799 x 4265, email [humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz).

## Appendix F Parent or Guardian Information Sheet Study 2



School of Psychology  
Private Box 756  
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Tel 64 4 8015799  
Fax 64 4 8012692

### What do I want to be and how do I get there: A possible selves workshop

#### INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

My name is Lucia Munoz. I was a high school teacher and have experience working with adolescents. My supervisor, Ian Evans is a Professor of Psychology at Massey University, and he has worked with schools in many different projects including programmes about school drop out. I am now studying a doctorate in the area of Clinical Psychology at Massey University and this study will be part of my research project. The aim of this project is to pilot a four-session, workshop, in which we explore your child's career goals and how she or he can start working towards them.

I am looking for seven Year 10 students who will be invited to participate in this study. The first seven people that contact me will be invited to participate in this study. However, their participation in this study requires written consent from parents/guardians. The workshop will take place at the school grounds and consists of four sessions of 50 minutes each. In order to be able to track change in the participants as a result of the workshop, I will ask participants to fill in some questionnaires in three points in time (session 1, 4 and one month after the workshop finished). The questionnaires ask about participant's school experience (emotions towards school, behaviour in class and academic commitment) as well as asking about participant's goals (short and long term) and participant's efficacy beliefs around school work.

If you give your child consent to participate, and he/she is interested in participating I will assign a number to your child (to keep their identity confidential) and he/she will be asked to attend the four workshop sessions. In addition, for eight weeks he/she will be asked to keep a brief diary. In the diary they will only fill in 4 lines: Mood rating (1-10), Today school was...., Today I felt..., I have spent ..... hours doing homework/studying today.

In order to keep your child's identity confidential I will provide him/her with stamped envelopes so that he/she can post the brief diary weekly to me.

It is unlikely, but if involvement in the project causes your child to be uncomfortable or upset, the school counsellor has agreed to be available for the provision of on-going support.

Your child's participation and identity will remain confidential which means that his/her responses in the questionnaires and diary cannot be linked to their name, and their name will not be used at all. In appreciation for his/her time and participation in this study he/she will receive a \$40 Warehouse Pre-paid Card upon completion of the four workshop sessions, and an additional \$40 Warehouse Pre-paid Card two months later when he/she completes the follow-up questionnaires.

The responses from this study will be analysed only by the researcher and supervisor. Upon completion of the study, the results will be published as part of the dissertation thesis and will be possibly published in an academic journal. The data of this study will be kept safely in the supervisor's computer and destroyed after five years. If you would like to receive a summary of the

research by email once it is completed please indicate so by ticking the appropriate box in the consent form. Otherwise please feel free to contact the researcher (details provided below).

**Your child** is under no obligation to accept this invitation.

**If your child** decides to participate, he/she has the right to:

- Pass on answering any particular question.
- Leave and stop his/her participation from the study (at any time during participation).
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation.
- Provide information on the understanding that his/her name will not be used.
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

**Researcher:**

Lucia Munoz Larroa. CHERUBS, K1, School of Psychology, Massey University, PO Box 756, Wellington, (04) 801 57 99 Extension 62324, mobile: 027 489 30 72, [Lucia.MunozLarroa@gmail.com](mailto:Lucia.MunozLarroa@gmail.com)

**Supervisor:**

Professor Ian Evans, School of Psychology, Massey University, PO Box 756, Wellington, (04) 801 57 99, Extension 6754.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 11/30. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact A/Prof Hugh Morton, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A telephone 06 350 5799 x 4265, email [humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz).

## Appendix G Individual Consent Form Study 2



# Massey University

School of Psychology  
Private Box 756  
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Tel 64 4 8015799  
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*What do I want to be and how do I get there: A possible selves workshop*  
**CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Full Name of the  
participant – printed** .....

Tick this box if you would like to receive a summary of this research.

E-mail address for the summary to be sent: \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher:**

Lucia Munoz Larroa. CHERUBS, K1, School of Psychology, Massey University, PO Box 756, Wellington, (04) 801 57 99 Extension 62324, mobile: 027 489 30 72, [Lucia.MunozLarroa@gmail.com](mailto:Lucia.MunozLarroa@gmail.com)

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This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 11/30. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact A/Prof Hugh Morton, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A telephone 06 350 5799 x 4265, email [humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz).

## Appendix H Parent or Guardian Consent Form Study 2



School of Psychology  
Private Box 756  
Wellington  
Tel 64 4 8015799  
Fax 64 4 8012692

*What do I want to be and how do I get there: A possible selves workshop*  
**CONSENT FORM – PARENT/GUARDIAN**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I parent/guardian agree to my child's participation in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature of the  
parent/guardian:**

**Date:**

.....

**Full Name of the  
participant – printed**

.....

Tick this box if you would like to receive a summary of this research.

E-mail address for the summary to be sent: \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher:**

Lucia Munoz Larroa. CHERUBS, K1, School of Psychology, Massey University, PO Box 756, Wellington, (04) 801 57 99 Extension 62324, mobile: 027 489 30 72, [Lucia.MunozLarroa@gmail.com](mailto:Lucia.MunozLarroa@gmail.com)

**Supervisor:**

Professor Ian Evans, School of Psychology, Massey University, PO Box 756, Wellington, (04) 801 57 99, Extension 6754.

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## Appendix I Next Year Possible Selves

### Next year possible selves

Who will you be next year? Each of us has some image or picture of what we will be like and what we want to avoid being like in the future. Think about next year—imagine what you will be like, and what you will be doing next year.

- In the lines below, write what you expect you will be like and what you expect to be doing next year.
- In the space next to each expected goal, mark No (✗) if you are not currently working on that goal or doing something about that expectation and mark Yes (✓) if you are currently doing something to get to that expectation or goal.
- For each expected goal that you marked **Yes**, use the space to the right to write what you are doing this year to attain that goal. Use the first space for the first expected goal, the second space for the second expected goal and so on.

Next year, I expect to be	Am I am doing something to be that way?		If yes, What I am doing now to be that way next year
	No	Yes	
(P1)			
(P2)			
(P3)			
(P4)			

Note: Participants had considerable space to expand on their answers.

In addition to expectations and expected goals, we all have images or pictures of what we do not want to be like; what we do not want to do or want to avoid being.

First, think a minute about ways you would not like to be next year—things you are concerned about or want to avoid being like.

- Write those concerns or selves to-be-avoided in the lines below.
- In the space next to each concern or to-be-avoided self, mark No (x) if you are not currently working on avoiding that concern or to-be-avoided self and mark Yes (x) if you are currently doing something so this will not happen next year.
- For each concern or to-be-avoided self that you marked **Yes**, use the space at the end of each line to write what you are doing this year to reduce the chances that this will describe you next year. Use the first space for the first concern, the second space for the second concern and so on.

Next year, I want to avoid being/doing	Am I doing something to avoid this?		If yes, What I am doing now to avoid being that way next year
	No	Yes	
(P5)			
(P6)			
(P7)			
(P8)			

Note: Participants had considerable space to expand on their answers.

## Appendix J School Engagement Scale

## School Engagement Scale

### Instructions

Please read the following statements carefully and chose the number that best describes how often you have been feeling or behaving this way in the **last 2 weeks**.

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Quite Often</i>

		1	2	3	4	5
1	I missed school without a valid reason.					
2	I skipped class while I was at school.					
3	I disrupted the class on purpose.					
4	I have been rude to my teacher.					
5	I like school.					
6	I have fun at school.					
7	What we learn in class is interesting.					
8	I enjoy what we do at school.					
9	I am happy when the work is quite challenging.					
10	Often, I do not want to stop working at the end of class.					
11	I spend a lot of time in English?					
12	I put a lot of effort into English?					
13	I put a lot of energy into English?					
14	I spend a lot of time in mathematics?					
15	I am ready to spend a lot of time in mathematics?					

Appendix K Goals and Perception of School Questionnaire

## Goals and Perception of School Questionnaire

**Instructions**

Please read the following statements carefully and **tick** the number that best describes how you have been feeling or thinking most of the time in the last 2 weeks.

<b>1</b>	What is the most common grade you get for your Maths assignments?								
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">No Credit</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Credit</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Merit</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Excellence</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> </table>	No Credit	Credit	Merit	Excellence	1	2	3	4
No Credit	Credit	Merit	Excellence						
1	2	3	4						
<b>2</b>	What is the most common grade you get for your English assignments?								
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">No Credit</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Credit</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Merit</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Excellence</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> </table>	No Credit	Credit	Merit	Excellence	1	2	3	4
No Credit	Credit	Merit	Excellence						
1	2	3	4						

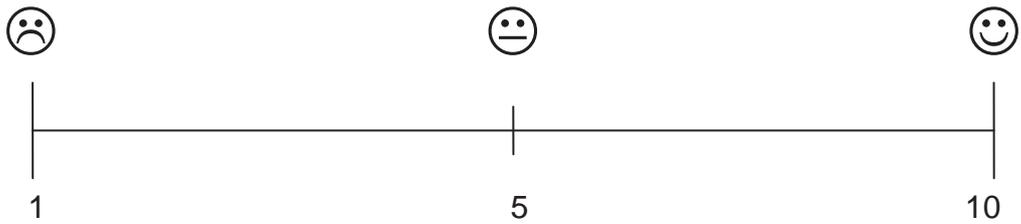
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

		1	2	3	4	5
1	I have plans for my future.					
2	I intend to finish school.					
3	When I am at school, I feel angry.					
4	I need to finish school to attain my goals for the future.					
5	When I am at school, I feel appreciated.					
6	When I am at school, I feel sad.					
7	School DOESN'T fit in my plans for the future.					
8	I intend to get NCEA Level 1 only.					
9	I really like being at school.					
10	When I am at school, I feel safe.					
11	I intend to get NCEA Level 3.					
12	I know what I want in the future.					
13	I intend to go to university or polytechnic.					





### Appendix M Four-Line Diary

<b>Four-Lines Diary</b>	
<p><b>Instructions</b></p> <p>Please answer these four questions each day, preferable at the same time (for example when you get home after school). For some questions you are asked to fill in the blank (questions 1, 3, 4, &amp; 5). For question 3 you are asked to rate your mood in a scale from one to ten.</p>	
<b>Monday</b>	
<p>1. Today school was..._____.</p>	
<p>2. Today I felt....._____.</p>	
<p>3. Mood Rate: Please place a cross "x" to rate your mood today from one "1" representing the worst you have ever felt and ten "10" the best you have ever felt.</p>	
	
<p>4. I have spent _____ hours doing homework/studying today.</p>	

\* The same format was presented for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Participants were not required to fill in the diary during the weekend or the school holidays.

**Appendix N Participant's Feedback Form**

“What do I want to be and how do I get there”

Personal Development workshop

1. What did you find was the most useful part of the workshop?
  
2. What part of the workshop was the least useful?
  
3. Which parts of the workshop would you change and how? Which parts should stay the same?
  
4. What do you think was the main thing you learnt from the workshop?
  
5. Do you think the workshop has had an impact on your school performance? If so, in which ways has it helped?
  
6. Are there any topics that we did not cover that you wish we had?
  
7. Would you recommend the workshop to other students?
  
8. Do you have any other comments to add?

**Appendix O Study 2 descriptive statistics for the measures of school engagement and self-efficacy.**

*Descriptive statistics of the School Engagement Scale, Goals and Perception of School Scale, and the Children's Perceived Self-Efficacy scale and their corresponding Subscales at Time 1 (N = 23).*

Scale/Subscale	Items	M (SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis	$\alpha$
SES Total	15	52.35 (10.85)	-1.06	1.19	0.92
SES Behavioural	4	16.83 (2.90)	-1.44	2.72	0.77
SES Affective	6	19.65 (4.88)	-0.73	0.99	0.90
SES Cognitive	5	15.87 (4.57)	-0.54	0.01	0.84
GPSS Total	13	51.32 (9.47)	-0.92	1.31	0.90
GPSS Affect	5	19.23 (3.77)	-0.55	-0.02	0.82
GPSS Short-Term Academic Goals	5	21.04 (4.31)	-1.32	2.19	0.86
GPSS Long-Term Goals	3	11.17 (2.89)	-0.20	-1.01	0.74
CPSE Total	23	143.29 (32.54)	-0.12	-0.59	0.91
CPSE Enlisting Social Resources	4	24.00 (6.99)	-0.86	-0.72	0.63
CPSE Academic Achievement	9	63.90 (13.23)	-0.38	-0.43	0.83
CPSE Self-Regulated Learning	10	52.35 (21.97)	-0.51	0.63	0.94

*Descriptive statistics of the School Engagement Scale, Goals and Perception of School Scale, and the Children's Perceived Self-Efficacy scale and their corresponding Subscales at Time 2 (N = 23).*

Scale/Subscale	<i>M (SD)</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis	$\alpha$
SES Total	51.13 (11.58)	-0.92	1.01	0.92
SES Behavioural	15.96 (3.56)	-1.13	1.05	0.89
SES Affective	18.96 (5.04)	-0.72	-0.38	0.90
SES Cognitive	16.22 (4.64)	-0.37	0.15	0.77
GPSS Total	51.36 (9.43)	-0.91	1.01	0.91
GPSS Affect	19 (3.42)	-0.39	0.00	0.77
GPSS Short-Term Academic Goals	20.95 (4.46)	-0.94	0.14	0.87
GPSS Long-Term Goals	11.61 (2.82)	-0.64	-0.20	0.80
CPSE Total	139.77 (35.76)	-0.92	1.09	0.92
CPSE Enlisting Social Resources	25.30 (6.89)	-0.89	0.81	0.66
CPSE Academic Achievement	61.68 (15.69)	-1.77	5.17	0.90
CPSE Self-Regulated Learning	51.96 (20.26)	-0.24	-1.08	0.91

*Descriptive statistics of the School Engagement Scale, Goals and Perception of School Scale, and the Children's Perceived Self-Efficacy scale and their corresponding Subscales at Time 3 (N = 18).*

Scale/Subscale	M (SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis	$\alpha$
SES Total	52.89 (10.19)	-1.02	1.66	0.91
SES Behavioural	16.00 (3.11)	-0.49	-0.32	0.79
SES Affective	20.33 (4.42)	-0.61	1.31	0.83
SES Cognitive	16.56 (4.20)	-0.54	0.45	0.83
GPSS Total	52.18 (7.80)	-1.15	2.37	0.88
GPSS Affect	19.28 (2.49)	0.16	1.01	0.63
GPSS Short-Term Academic Goals	21.59 (3.81)	-1.63	2.65	0.88
GPSS Long-Term Goals	11.11 (2.32)	-0.31	-0.08	0.56
CPSE Total	152.12 (23.92)	-0.52	-0.78	0.84
CPSE Enlisting Social Resources	27.50 (4.74)	-0.4	0.32	0.77
CPSE Academic Achievement	63.88 (11.93)	-0.62	-0.12	0.88
CPSE Self-Regulated Learning	58.78 (17.44)	-0.5	-1.06	0.50

**Appendix P Study 2 descriptive statistics for the self-reported performance in Math and English.**

*Descriptive statistics of the self-reported performance in Maths and English assignments at Time 1, 2 and 3.*

Variable	Time	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Skewness	Kurtosis
Maths	1	2.26 (0.96)	0.09	-0.97
	2	2.35 (0.79)	0.12	-0.02
	3	2.67 (1.14)	-0.33	-1.24
English	1	2.61 (0.78)	-0.39	0.07
	2	2.88 (0.78)	-0.67	1
	3	2.78 (0.88)	-0.69	0.3

*Note.* *N* = 23 at Time 1, *N* = 17 at Time 2, and *N* = 18 at Time 3.

**Appendix Q Study 2 descriptive statistics for the Next Year Possible Selves variables.**

*Descriptive statistics at Time 1, 2 and 3, of the Next Year Possible Selves variables.*

Variable	Time	<i>M (SD)</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis
Academic Expected Possible Selves	1	1.04 (1.07)	0.65	-0.77
	2	1.22 (1.0)	0.73	-0.32
	3	1.67 (1.19)	0.74	-0.14
Strategies for Academic Expected Possible Selves	1	0.91 (1.20)	1.21	0.58
	2	1.39 (1.20)	0.54	-0.65
	3	1.33 (1.19)	0.68	-0.14
Plausibility	1	1.17 (1.07)	0.35	-1.14
	2	1.61 (1.20)	0.85	1.55
	3	2.44 (1.29)	0.5	0.47
Balance	1	0.43 (.66)	1.29	0.63
	2	1.17 (.83)	-0.35	-1.48
	3	1.61 (.98)	0.92	0.79

Note. *N* = 23 at Time 1, *N* = 23 at Time 2, and *N* = 18 at Time 3.

Correlation between the school engagement, self-efficacy, self-reported academic performance and possible selves variables at Time 1.

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. SES	-	.78**	.64**	.47*	0.38	-0.02	-0.01	0.18	0.16
2. GPSS			.64**	.46*	0.29	-0.02	-0.12	0.10	0.14
3. CPSE				.72**	0.38	-0.03	-0.28	0.00	0.38
4. Maths					.62**	-0.07	-0.35	-0.20	0.09
5. English						0.05	-0.22	-0.11	0.28
6. Academic Expected Possible Selves							.64**	.79**	.68**
7. Strategies								.86**	0.22
8. Plausibility									.47*
9. Balance									-

**Appendix R Study 2 descriptive statistics for the Diary Study Time and Mood Rating variables.**

*Descriptive statistics of the average Study Time on a six week period per setting.*

Group	Statistic	Diary 1	Diary 2	Diary 3	Diary 4	Diary 5	Diary 6
	<i>N</i>	15	14	12	9	9	8
Low-School Engagement	<i>M(SD)</i>	36.67 (30.13)	36.49 (36.44)	38.42 (32.65)	23.47 (20.86)	39 (39.09)	50.13 (44.26)
	Skewness	0.76	2.33	0.57	0.84	0.68	1.51
	Kurtosis	-0.03	7.22	-0.97	-0.86	-0.74	2.58
	<i>n</i>	5	4	4	4	4	4
High-Motivation	<i>M(SD)</i>	37.6 (26.85)	55.75 (19.6)	61.5 (52.16)	34.38 (32.36)	66 (30.2)	96 (40.1)
	Skewness	1.84	1.53	0.4	1.9	1.13	0.44
	Kurtosis	3.92	2.74	-1.21	3.68	2.23	-3.31

*Note.* The *n* values represent the number of participants that completed the Four-Line diary each week.

Mood Rating's Descriptive Statistics for the High-School Engagement and Low-School Engagement groups during the time the diary was filled in.

Group	Statistic	Diary 1	Diary 2	Diary 3	Diary 4	Diary 5	Diary 6
	<i>N</i>	5	4	4	4	4	4
High-School Engagement	<i>M(SD)</i>	7.09 (.96)	6.11 (1.15)	5.81 (1.56)	6.72 (1.14)	6.13 (1.45)	6.34 (.93)
	Skewness	-0.73	1.95	1.19	0.22	0.59	0.55
	Kurtosis	-1.96	3.83	1.36	-4.76	1.64	-0.34
Low-School Engagement	<i>N</i>	16	14	12	9	8	8
	<i>M(SD)</i>	6.55 (1.20)	6.52 (1.17)	6.33 (1.60)	6.54 (1.76)	6.07 (1.95)	6.52 (1.42)
	Skewness	-0.89	1	-1.39	-1.06	0.41	0.96
	Kurtosis	0.77	2.7	3.44	3.88	1.34	2.224

### Appendix S Normality and Independence

Analyses of normality for the Low-School and High-School Engagement groups at Time 1

Group	Variable	Shapiro-Wilk	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Low-School Engagement	SES Total	0.90	13	0.15
	GPSS Total	0.93	13	0.29
	Math	0.81	13	0.01*
	English	0.78	13	0.004*
	CPSE	0.96	13	0.711
	Total Academic Possible			
	Selves	0.82	13	0.011
	Strategies	0.75	13	0.002*
	Plausibility	0.79	13	0.005*
	Balance	0.53	13	0**
High-School Engagement	SES Total	0.92	6	0.476
	GPSS Total	0.85	6	0.163
	Math	0.87	6	0.212
	English	0.83	6	0.101
	CPSE	0.73	6	0.013*
	Total Academic Possible			
	Selves	0.83	6	0.101
	Strategies	0.82	6	0.091
	Plausibility	0.64	6	0.001*
	Balance	0.85	6	0.167

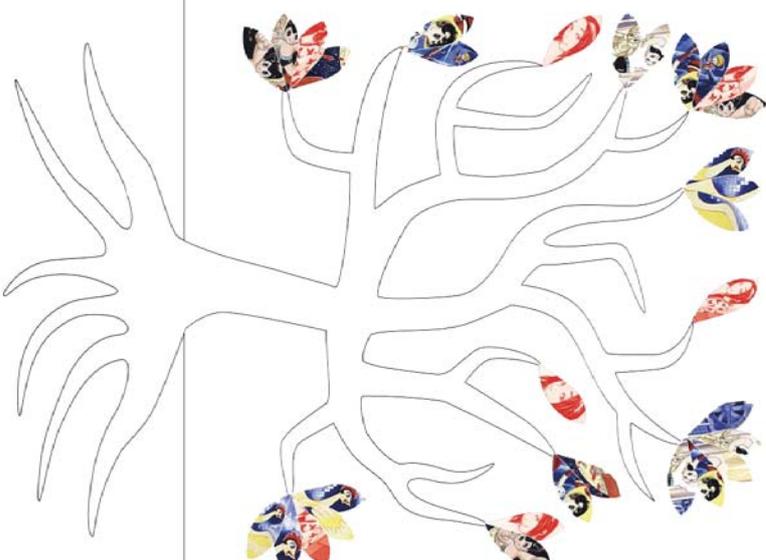
Note. \* *p* values  $\leq .05$ , \*\**p* values  $\leq .001$

## Analyses of normality for the Non-Responder and Responder groups at Time 1

Group	Variable	Shapiro-Wilk	df	P
Non-Responder	SES Total	0.86	9	0.101
	GPSS Total	0.95	9	0.661
	Math	0.92	9	0.364
	English	0.81	9	0.028*
	CPSE	0.89	9	0.179
	Study Time	0.88	7	.259
	Mood Rating	0.89	7	.284
Responder	SES Total	0.78	10	0.008*
	GPSS Total	0.91	10	0.301
	Math	0.78	10	0.008*
	English	0.79	10	0.012*
	CPSE	0.91	10	0.279
	Study Time	0.88	13	0.90
	Mood Rating	0.85	13	0.031*

Note. \*  $p$  values  $\leq .05$ , \*\*  $p$  values  $\leq .001$

Appendix T Participant Certificate of Attendance



 **Massey University**

**CERUBS LAB**

(CHILDREN ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH UNIT FOR BEHAVIOURAL STUDIES)

---

**CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE**

This certifies that:

**Name of Participant**

Has attended and completed 4 hours of the Personal Development Workshop in Goal Setting

**“What Do I Want To Be and How Do I Get There?”**

---

Lucía Muñoz Larrrea, Facilitator  
November, 2011

**Appendix U Participant's Personal Letter: Example 1**

Dear Participant,

I wanted to drop you a brief note to share some thoughts about you.

It appears to me that at the beginning you were not so keen to share and open up. I am very glad you did in the end, because it has been a true honour to get to know you. I think you are someone who values honesty and friendships. I also saw your ability to help and care for others and I was impressed by your ability to reflect on how your actions might affect them. Don't underestimate your self-reflection ability because it is a great skill to have, and it will help you to change your behaviour when it is causing you trouble. It can also give you information on how to repair your relationships when things are not going the way you want them to go.

In this workshop you identified that family and friends are very important components of your identity, and you also identified ways in which you can grow in these areas. At the start of the workshop you mentioned that you wanted to be more reliable. In fact, you were very reliable in this workshop; you attended all the sessions and answered all the calls and filled in the diaries. I was impressed the level of commitment and effort you have put into this.

You also mentioned you are not sure about what you want for the future. However, I think you do. Although the exact career path you might choose is not clear yet (maybe something in computers), you mentioned you want to pass NCEA level one, you want to be surrounded by friends, family, have money and a car. It is very good to see that you are using your creativity to build up new possibilities and to open new doors. I wonder what you will come up with!

School has been very challenging at times and I admire your perseverance; you haven't given up. I would encourage you to reach out and utilise all the resources available to you to make school enjoyable and an opportunity to learn. For example, it was very good to hear that you feel well supported by your parents, and remember you can also utilize the resources for young people available at school (teachers, counsellors, etc.) and in the community.

Thank you for participating and opening up to me.

I wish for you nothing but the best.

**Appendix V Participant's Personal Letter: Tama**

Dear Tama,

I wanted to drop you a brief note to share some thoughts about you.

I truly appreciated the opportunity to get to know you. I think you are an honest, enthusiastic, participative, respectful, kind, generous, and caring person. You are someone who values having meaningful and respectful relationships. I was impressed by your level of commitment to the workshop by attending to all the sessions and participating actively and positively.

In this workshop you identified that family, friends, sports, and being a guitar player are important components of your identity. You also identified ways in which you can grow in these areas. You mentioned you would like to help your parents. I think you do. Going to school is your role now and I am impressed to see that even when it is challenging at times, you keep trying to do your best. That is the best you can do for your family and in the long term this will allow you to help them in other ways.

You also mentioned that you want to pass NCEA, keep practising sports, become a musician, be healthy and avoid being an addict (alcohol and drugs) and avoid getting in trouble (jail). Although the career you will choose might not be clear yet (maybe musician), it is really good to see that you are committed to achieving your goals and that you have been using different strategies and resources to assist you in doing so. I would like to encourage you to keep visualising your future keeping in mind the things you want and those you don't.

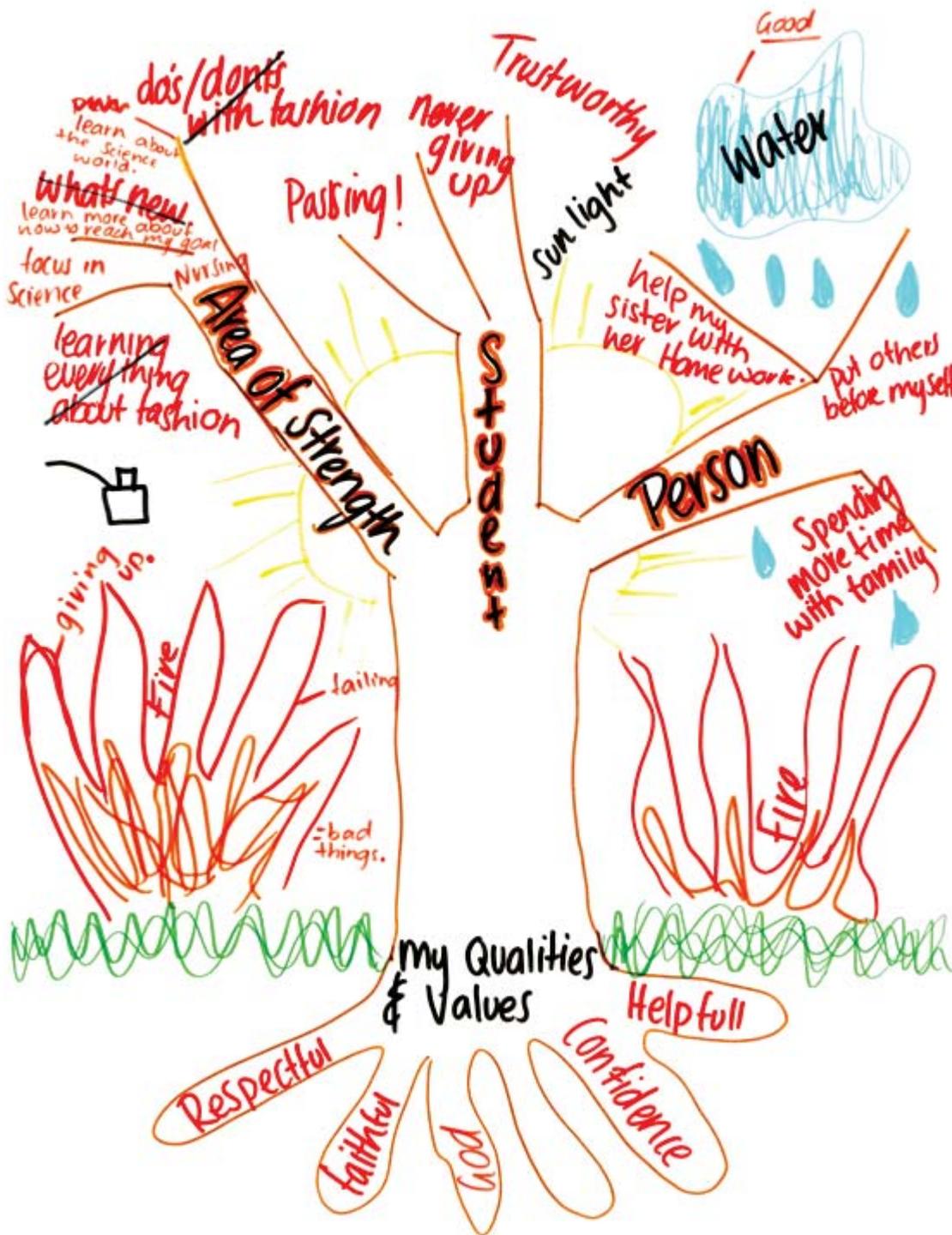
Being an adolescent is not easy. As an adolescent, you are probably facing challenges that at times cause unpleasant emotions and confusion and often require creative thinking. In these moments I would like to encourage you to not only reach out and utilize the resources you have identified are available to you (family, and friends), but also to utilize the resources for young people available at school (teachers, counsellors, etc.) and in the community.

Thank you for participating and opening up to me.

I wish for you nothing but the best.

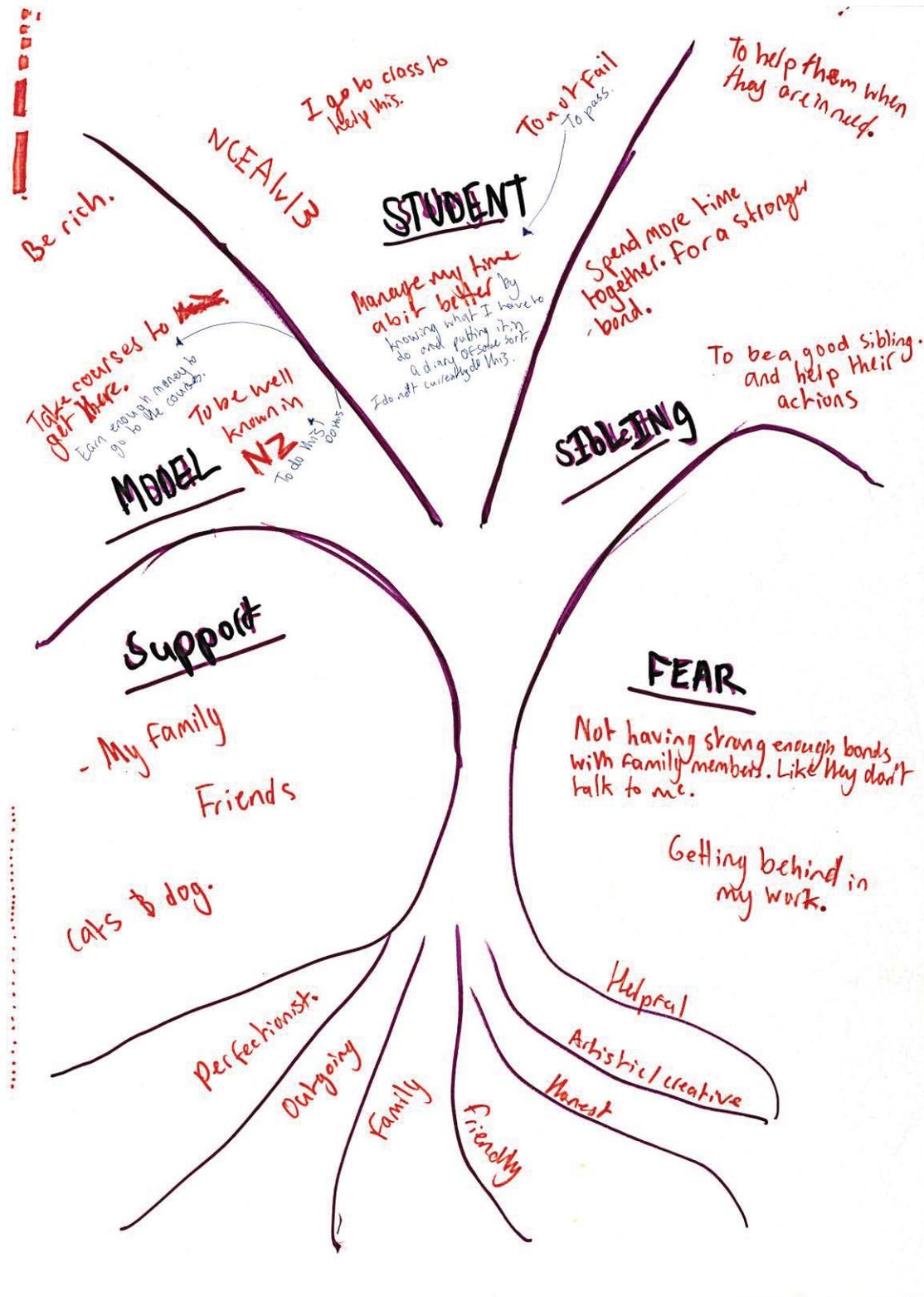


Appendix X Possible Selves Tree: Julia





Appendix Z Possible Selves Tree: Anna



**Appendix AA Workshop's Guideline for Facilitators**

# **Year 10 Workshop:**

**What do I want to be and how do I get there.**

**(Facilitator's Guideline)**

**Researcher and Facilitator:**

**Lucia Munoz Larroa**

**Supervised by:**

**Ian Evans**

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## **Workshop Aim**

The aim of this workshop is to assist you in the journey of exploring your visions of yourself in the future, and to give you tools that you can use to reach you goals.

## **Workshop Overview**

In this workshop you will reflect and explore your interests, strengths, weaknesses, goals, as well as your expectations, hopes, and fears for the future. This reflection will help you to choose goals to work towards, and in this workshop you will find tools that you can use to achieve your goals even when things are not going according to the plan.

## **Session Outline**

### ***Session 1***

1. Aim.
2. Introduction to the workshop and facilitator: Time Line, Diary and Call, Structure-Procedure.
3. Confidentiality and its limits.
4. Group's Ground Rules.
5. Introduction of group members: Name, Favourite Animal, Reasons to Participate, Outcome Expectations.
6. Discovering: What are my Strengths, Interest, Hobbies, Skills, and Difficulties<sup>1</sup>?

---

<sup>1</sup> The aim is to find an area in which the participant feels positive first and then areas in which she/he does not feel so positive. Possible Selves Program (Hock, Deshler, & Schumaker, 2009).

## **Session 2**

1. Aim.
2. Exploring identity<sup>2</sup>.
3. Sketching the Possible Selves Tree<sup>3</sup>.

## **Session 3**

1. Aim.
2. Nurturing: How to keep the Tree strong<sup>4</sup>.
3. Feedback from Trees
4. Growing: How do I get there?
5. Enlisting long-term and short-term goals<sup>5</sup>.
6. Relationship between motivation and reward immediacy.

## **Session 4**

1. Aim.
2. My rewards are ...
3. Why are rewards important?
4. Relaxation Exercise
5. Self-care and resources available in the community<sup>6</sup>.
6. End of workshop.

---

<sup>2</sup> Possible Selves Program (Hock et al., 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Possible Selves Program (Hock et al., 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Possible Selves Program (Hock et al., 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Goal Setting, Kids Health (CYWHS, 2009), Breathing Exercise (Wilhelm, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Youth Services Directory, (Youthline, -no date-), Self-care section from Youthline volunteer's training manual 2008.

## **Materials**

- Pens and felt pens
- Plain paper A2
- Blue Tack

## **Handouts**

- Workshop's Time Line
- Goal Setting
- Resources in the community

## **Time Line**

### **Workshop (1-4 sessions)**

- Dates

### **School Terms and holidays**

- Dates

# SESSION 1

## ***Aim***

At the end of this session you will have a clear idea of this project and how we are going to be working together over the next two months. You will work as a group to establish the ground rules to ensure that this workshop becomes a safe and supportive environment. In this session, you will also start exploring your interests, strengths and difficulties.

## ***Activities:***

### **Ground Rules**

One or two of you will volunteer to write down the rules in an A5 paper. Each one of you will take turns to suggest one rule that you think will help in creating an environment in which you all feel safe to participate<sup>7</sup>.

### **Reasons to participate and outcome expectations<sup>8</sup>**

This activity has the purpose of helping us to become familiar with each other and learn everybody's names. We will go around in a circle and say our name, our favourite animal, the reason why you chose to participate in this workshop and what you want to get out of it.

---

<sup>7</sup> The facilitator moderates the participation and makes sure that the following rules are included: Respect, Acceptance, Non-Judgmental Remarks, Confidentiality, Active Participation, One Person Talking at a Time, Open to Other's Ideas, Cell Phones Off, Support/Encouragement, and Have fun. If the participants have not come up with some of the basic rules the facilitator can prompt them by presenting scenarios of what could happen if the rule is not stated and agreed on (e.g., How would you feel if a member of the group is texting during a group's discussion?, How would you feel if you hear a member of the group sharing your personal information or opinions to others who are not members of this group? Is there something we can all agree on here to prevent that from happening?). Ideally, most of the rules must come from the group members. However, if all the members of the group have participated and give indication of not having more rules to suggest and there are rules that are missing, the facilitator can take a turn and suggest the rules. The rule: "Sharing all the Jokes" is a crucial rule from the facilitator's perspective, as it allows her/him to ask the members to speak up covert comments or remarks that specially at the beginning of the group process might be of a teasing or bullying nature. I would say something along the lines of: "I am not as fast as you and if you say a joke or something funny I will probably miss it and I want to know what the fun is about, so I want you to please explain or translate the jokes to me because I do not want to miss out or feel left out".

<sup>8</sup> The facilitator needs to write down the information provided by the participant. Participant's reasons to participate and outcome expectations become crucial at the end of the workshop as allows them to reflect on the learning experience and change.

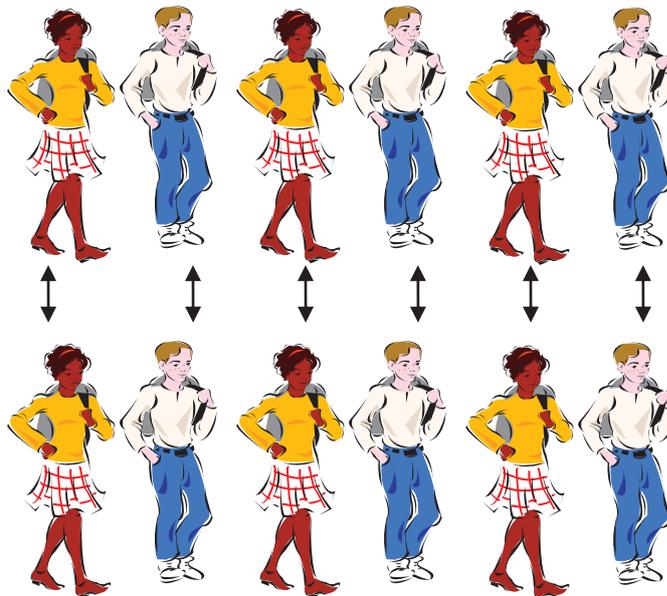
## Sausages<sup>9</sup>

We all have areas of interest and areas in which we have had positive experiences because we enjoy, we have fun and we might feel we have the required skills. In general, we are interested in things that make us feel good about ourselves. In this activity, we will talk about your interests.

As a group you will line up in two lines that face each other, so that each member of the group has someone standing in front of them. We will take four turns to talk about:

1. The things you like
2. The things you don't like
3. The things you are good at
4. The things you are not good at.

You will have a one-minute turn for each topic, while the other person listens to you, then we will swap places, and the one that was listening now will be the one talking.<sup>10</sup> The line assigned to listen needs to remain attentive but silent.



<sup>9</sup> The format and name of this activity was taken from the Youthline Selection manual 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Ideally in this activity one facilitator is in charge of taking the time and the other facilitator can line up with the rest of the participants to share with them and to listen to their likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses. It is likely that some participant would not like the idea of interacting so closely, but this is a good activity to break the ice and promote group bonding. Therefore, it is important for the facilitator to give no space for hesitation or doubt getting into the activity, portraying confidence that they can do it and it is fun.

## SESSION 2

### **Aim**

At the end of this session you will have a better idea of the personal values and qualities that make who you are and you will have started exploring your strengths, weaknesses, goals, fears, hopes and expectations for the future. By sketching a Tree that represents you will also reflect on your values, short-term, and long-term goals and the things you can do or are already doing to reach your goals.

### **Exploring identity**

We all have different parts of our identity. For example, I am Mexican, I am a woman, I am a student, a friend, a sister, a daughter, etc. Here are some examples of components of our identity that when put all together reflect the unique person we all are.

For each component (person, learner/student, or in the area of strength) answer the following questions.



#### **Component 1** PERSON<sup>11</sup>

1. Who am I as a \_\_\_\_\_? What statements or words best describe you as a \_\_\_\_\_?
2. What do you hope as a \_\_\_\_\_?
3. What do you expect as a \_\_\_\_\_?
4. What do you fear as a \_\_\_\_\_?



#### **Component 2** STUDENT<sup>12</sup>

5. Who am I as a STUDENT? What statements or words best describe you as a STUDENT?
6. What do you hope as a STUDENT?

---

<sup>11</sup> In this component the participant can chose to explore his identity as a friend, family member, sibling, etc.

<sup>12</sup> This component is compulsory and very important to this particular sample as all of the participants will be enrolled in school. The aim is to ensure the participant reflects on this part of his/her identity.

7. What do you expect as a STUDENT?
8. What do you fear as a STUDENT?



**Component 3** AREA OF STRENGTH or HOBBY<sup>13</sup>

9. Who am I as a \_\_\_\_\_? What statements or words best describe you as a \_\_\_\_\_?
10. What do you hope as a \_\_\_\_\_?
11. What do you expect as a \_\_\_\_\_?
12. What do you fear as a \_\_\_\_\_?

### ***Sketching the Possible Selves Tree***

In order to achieve goals, some people have found useful to imagine themselves in the future. They have found that we typically can do this in three ways:

- 1) To think of what I **expect** to become
- 2) To think of what I **hope** to become
- 3) To think of what I **fear** to become

These three ways to look at ourselves in the future are called Possible Selves and are important in guiding our decisions in the present. For example, I would be more likely to do things in the present if I know they will help me to reach my goals and I would be more likely to avoid things that I think could prevent me from reaching such goals.

In the previous activity you listed a lot of important information about yourself. Now you will bring all that information together by creating a **Possible Selves Tree**<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> This component is an area of strength for the participant, for example a sport or an interest.

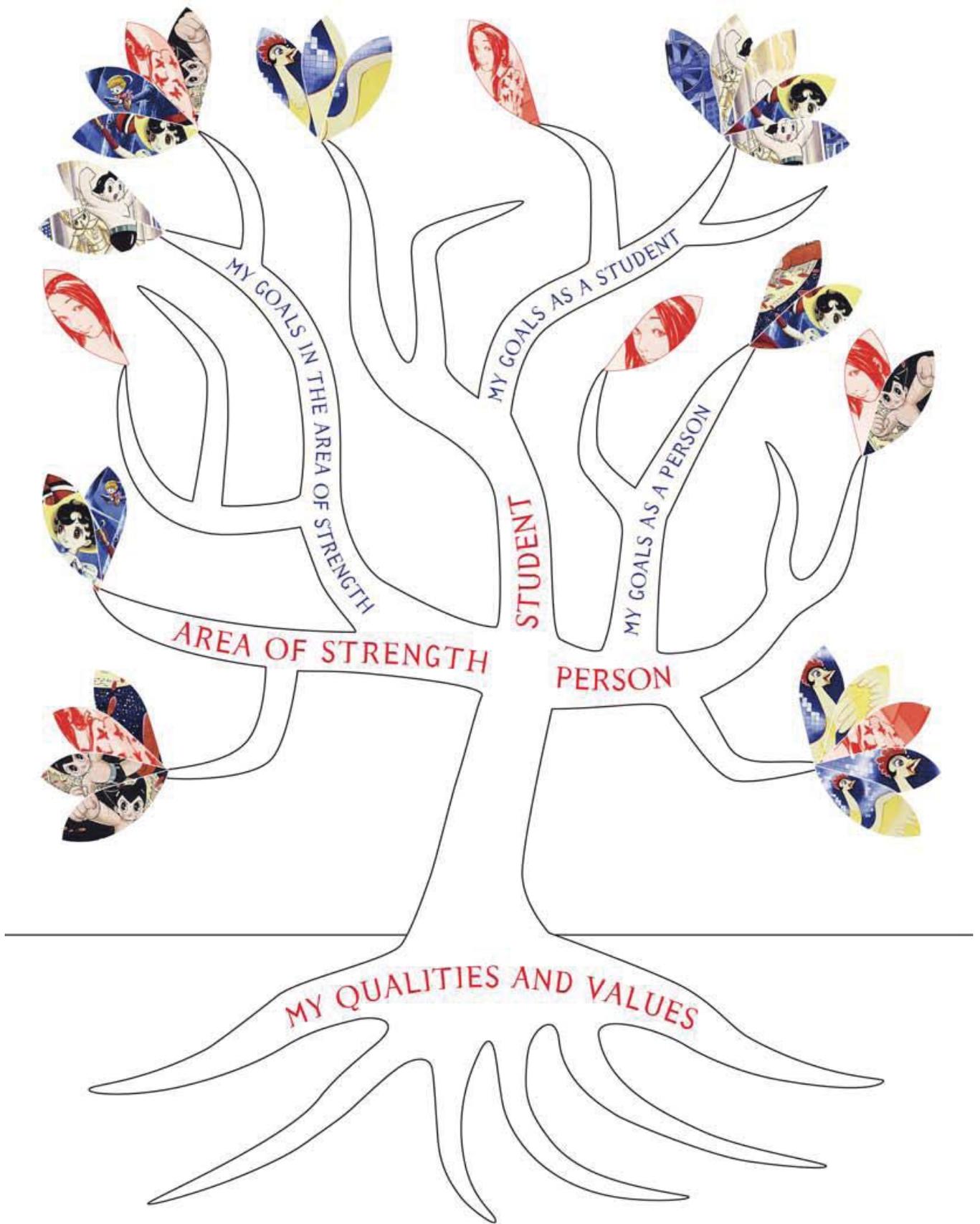
<sup>14</sup> To prevent participants from focusing on the drawing part of the task only, it is important to mention to them that this is meant to be a sketch instead of a detail and elaborated drawing, and that we are very interested on the content of the Tree rather than on the form.

- The roots represent your qualities and values, for example, honesty, loyalty, etc.
- The branches of the Tree represent you as a person, student/learner, worker/ area of strength.
- The smaller branches that make up the foliage represent the small steps or actions you have taken or can take to make the big branch grow thicker.
- Your fears are represented as dangerous conditions for your Tree. For example, lightning, termites, or poison in the soil.

See the example of a Possible Selves Tree<sup>15</sup>.

---

<sup>15</sup> Participants should be encouraged to be creative instead of just copying the sample presented in the manual.



Possible Selves Tree designed by Renee Faith 2011.

## SESSION 3

### ***Aim***

At the end of this session you will have reflected and incorporated the feedback from your Tree. You will have reflected on how to make your Tree grow stronger. That is, you will have started to think about how to grow in the areas you are interested on. At the end of this session you will have a better idea of how to start working towards you goals and what to do when things don't go according to the plan.

### ***Nurturing the Tree: How to Keep the Tree Strong***

The task in this activity is to think about ways to keep the Tree strong:<sup>16</sup>

- How to make the Tree fuller?
- How to protect the Tree from fears?
- How to provide the Tree with nourishment?

Now your job is to incorporate into the Tree you have sketched your supports represented as the things you identify that will pamper, nurture, and protect the Tree. For example, water, sun, fertilizer that represent support you get from family, friends, etc.

### ***Feedback***

Let us look at the conditions of the Tree:

- Is there a balance between what you identified as dangerous to the Tree and what you identified as nourishment?

---

<sup>16</sup> These questions provide an opportunity for the student to evaluate the condition of their Tree, set goals for the future and discuss how learning can support the total Tree.

- Is there a balance between what represents you as a person, student/learner, and hobby/strength area?<sup>17</sup>
- Does the Tree fully represent the ideas you identified in Activity I? If not, what is missing?
- How would you like your Tree to look like?<sup>18</sup>

## ***Growing: How do I get there?***

By looking at the Tree we have an idea of what your goals are. The question is: how to reach those goals?<sup>19</sup>

1. Make a list of your **Long Term Goals**
2. Select the long term goal that is **most important** to you.
3. Make a list of **five Short Term Goals** that will help you achieve your long term goal.
4. Briefly describe how it will look like to achieve each goal.
5. Chose one short term goal and describe the **small steps** you might need to take to achieve it.
6. Think of how you are going to **reward** yourself for achieving each step.

---

<sup>17</sup> In this section the facilitator will explore ways to balance out the Tree by using the areas of strength and interest that the participant identified in Activity I.

<sup>18</sup> At this point the facilitator elicits a discussion about how our possible selves can be limited by the influence of the environment in which we are; the individual's history, culture and social context.

<sup>19</sup> Students are given the goal-setting hand out. An opportunity to discuss the importance of school qualifications arises when participants are asked to break their long-term goals into short-term ones. For example, most participants might mention that in the future they want to have certain amount of wealth and when this goal is broken down they realise they need a well paid job, and to get a job they need qualifications. It is important to elicit a reflection of the type of qualifications and the role of school as well as to give them some information about statistics of unemployment in New Zealand which reflect the relationship between having high school qualifications and being less likely to be unemployed (Indicators OECD, 2009).

Long-Term Goal <sup>20</sup>	Short-Term goals	Small Steps: What will I need to do?	What obstacles can I anticipate?	Who can help me?	My Reward
1.	1.				
	2.				
	3.				
	4.				
	5.				

<sup>20</sup> (CYWHS, 2009)

## SESSION 4

### ***Aim***

In this session you will continue working on an action plan that will assist you in pursuing a long-term goal. In addition, you will have discussed and reflected on some strategies to keep you motivated. You will also have acquired knowledge of the different resources in the community available to young people, which can act as a source of support to you in reaching your goals.

### ***My rewards are...<sup>21</sup>***

It is very important to reward your self for each little step, so this is a good moment to create a list of **fifteen** things you can do for you when you achieve each small step.

### ***Why are rewards important?***

In general we tend to engage in activities that make us feel good. That is, we are attracted to rewards. Some activities offer immediate rewards. For example, turning the TV on, hanging out with friends. Other activities such as practicing a sport or studying offer delayed rewards, such as the sense of achievement from competitions or getting a good mark. The reward from achieving at a sport and at school is long lasting and bigger than the reward from watching a TV show. However, at times those achievement rewards seem so far away in the future that they appear smaller than going to a party or watching TV. That is why it can be hard to stay motivated to reach a long-term goal such as finishing school, because the reward comes much later. By rewarding your self for each small step you can make your long-term goals more attractive.

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<sup>21</sup> Some suggestions: Have fun, have a good laugh; Spend time with people who you find fun and nurturing; Watch a movie; Cook a meal or bake something; Listen to music that makes you feel good; Go for a walk; Eat food you enjoy; Sit in the sun; Do something creative: drawing, painting, dancing, writing, playing music, etc; Read a good book; Have a relaxing bath/shower; Make a conscious effort to eat, sleep, exercise and have time to yourself; Tell people in your life how you are feeling (family, friends); If you know you have a busy time coming up you can organize getting some help and getting plenty of rest and relaxation in anticipation that you might not get enough of this soon; Ask for help.

## ***Things to remember***<sup>22</sup>

- Be realistic, set small goals to start with.
- Keep adding more small steps if it doesn't look like you're making a lot of progress.
- Tell someone you trust about what you are doing. Talking about it will keep you feeling good and help you to work out your steps, what to learn and who can help.
- Reward yourself.

## ***Relaxation Exercise***

### **“Commas of the day”**

Try regular short practices of this one minute exercise ★ it makes you feel great ★

- ❶ Sit in front of a clock or watch you can use to time the passing of one minute.
- ❷ Your task is to focus your entire attention on your breathing, and nothing else, for the whole minute.
- ❸ Don't put it off until later – have a go now.

## ***Self-care and resources in the community***

When you sketched the Tree and added the things that will make the Tree fuller, stronger and protected from the fears you were exercising looking after yourself. Looking after ourselves, that is, trying to do something nice for our *self* regularly, allows us to feel good and keep a balance in life which will impact on you motivation to keep going and reach your goals. Have a go at recognising when you are feeling stressed, tired, sick, etc., and do something about it.

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<sup>22</sup> (CYWHS, 2009)

## **Resources in the community (Wellington Central): Who can help?<sup>23</sup>**

You are not alone. It is our responsibility as adults in the community to provide young people with opportunities and support when they need it. Your school has teachers, counsellors and other staff that can give you a hand to figure out ways in which you can achieve your goals or overcome problems. In addition, there are other organizations in the community which purpose is to help you. Here is a list of contacts of the some of the organizations.

**Youthline:** Is a Youth Help Line that offers counselling, information and support services. That means you can call and talk to a counsellor about what is going on for you. Moreover, Youthline counsellors are also there to provide information about other resources you can access in the community. Their service is 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Free Call 0800 376633 or Free TXT 234, Email: [talk@youthline.co.nz](mailto:talk@youthline.co.nz), Website: [www.youthline.co.nz](http://www.youthline.co.nz)

**Evolve:** Evolve is a 'one-stop-shop' youth service which offers primary health care, sexual health, social support, counselling, peer support and activity based projects. All services are free and confidential for New Zealand residents aged 10-25. Address: 5 Eva Street, Te Aro 6011; Tel: (04) 801 9150; Email: [evolve@evolveyouth.org.nz](mailto:evolve@evolveyouth.org.nz) ; Website: [www.evolveyouth.org.nz](http://www.evolveyouth.org.nz)

**BGI (Boys and Girls Institute):** BGI is a youth development organisation established in 1883 by a group of young people in Wellington City. Offers a range of holistic youth and family development services including: •mentoring, •adventure therapy, •relational youth work, •youth social groups and events, •youth action research, •parenting programmes, •dance & arts programmes, •youth leadership programmes. Located at Level 4 Troup House 3 MacDonald Cres, Wellington CBD, (04) 385 9549, [www.bgi.org.nz](http://www.bgi.org.nz), [rod@bgi.org.nz](mailto:rod@bgi.org.nz)

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<sup>23</sup> Refer to the rewards and support network previously identified. Hand outs and resources about organizations in the Wellington Region are given (Youthline, -no date-).

**YouthLaw:** Free legal service for children and young people. Tel: (09) 309 6967 For free call dial 010 and follow instructions, advice line from 10am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. Email: [info@youthlaw.co.nz](mailto:info@youthlaw.co.nz) Website: [www.youthlaw.co.nz](http://www.youthlaw.co.nz)

**Plinfo:** A free phone helpline that provides information and assistance on issues about children and young people at school. Free call 0800 499 488.

**Challenge 2000:** This is a professional, innovative, passionate Youth Development, Community and Family Work agency which predominantly serves the Wellington Region. They focus on an innovative, holistic and challenging way that empowers young people to develop their strengths, enhance their well-being and to make significant and positive lifestyle choices. Address: 27 Dr Taylor Terrace, Johnsonville, Wellington; Tel: (64) 4 477 0338 or (64) 4 477 0045; Email: [challenge2000@wnc.quik.co.nz](mailto:challenge2000@wnc.quik.co.nz); Website: [www.challenge2000.org.nz](http://www.challenge2000.org.nz).

### End of workshop<sup>24</sup>

Get together as a group and take turns to share your feelings about the end of the workshop. Fill in the feedback form, collect your certificate of attendance and your letter.



Congratulations!  
You have done great work!



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<sup>24</sup> At this point the facilitator should acknowledge the end of the workshop and the group as such. This should be an opportunity to reflect on how the different individuals feel about termination including the facilitators. The facilitators should acknowledge and praise participant's effort and commitment. It is important to communicate to participants that change has taken place and the material discussed and worked on will continue growing in them strengthening the experience and the learning. It is important to get the participants to fill in a feedback form and to give the participants a certificate of attendance to the workshop as well as a personal letter in which the facilitator emphasises participant's strengths, goals and resources available.

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