



University of South Australia
Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences.
Magill Campus.

Title of the research project: Possible Selves and the Motivation of High School Students.

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Dear teachers,

I will be conducting research in educational psychology using the students in year 10 as participants in a questionnaire survey. I will survey them again when they reach year 12.

My interest is in the future thoughts and aspirations of students in high school and their degree of motivation to complete their secondary education. Students who look to the future and think about who or what they might become, use these inner thoughts and hopes as motivational tools to help them persist with their education despite all setbacks and barriers that are placed in their way. Students' future hopes and aspirations, called *Possible Selves*, can be identified and linked to other aspects of their inner selves such as self-esteem and optimism. Research conducted in the United States has shown that the possible selves are strongly linked to motivation and persistence by providing specific goals to strive for through structured thoughts and actions. In addition, they motivate a person by providing the emotional energy to persevere in pursuing those goals.

Students in year 10, with permission obtained from parents, will be asked to respond to a questionnaire that allows a student to express thoughts about the future - their possible selves. In addition, the students will respond to questions that reveal aspects of their self-esteem and whether or not they have an optimistic outlook on life

in general. I also have a scale designed to measure persistence at a task. Students will not be identified by name and all data will remain confidential within the guidelines required by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of South Australia. Students and parents will have the option of withdrawing from the proposed research at any time. The questionnaires are available on the World Wide Web and have been designed to be quick to administer thus reducing the time away from classes to a minimum. It is estimated that individuals could take up to a total of 40 minutes to complete the required responses. Data collected will be sent directly to the university by each participant completing the questionnaires on the World Wide Web.

If you are involved in conducting the survey, you will only need to provide the Internet address for the students and then supervise those taking part. The on-screen instructions should allow them to work alone. You can clarify what they have to do but not assist them in how to answer the questions in the survey.

Thank you for your cooperation. Please contact me or Dr Yates, if further information is required. The name and telephone number of the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee is listed below. She will also be available to discuss general aspects of the project should you wish to do so.

The current Chair is Ms Linley Hartmann,
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Information about the research and related matters is available at:

http://www.education.unisa.edu.au/karma/sa_schools/to_schools.htm

Yours sincerely,

**Geoff A. Higgs,
School of Education
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