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Successful young adults are asked -
'In your experience, what builds confidence?'

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

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Abstract

This study used an ethnographic approach to explore the perceptions, interpretations and meanings young adults gave to the concepts of 'confidence' and 'building confidence'. Giving young adults viewpoints a central positioning reflected the researcher's perception of adolescents as active contributors not only to their own wellbeing, but also to the development of healthier communities and societies as a whole.

The research participants were Year 13 students in their last week of attendance at a co-educational state high school within a provincial New Zealand community. In support of the literature this study found that 'confidence' per se was not a concept explored often, but rather it was an assumed component of broader concepts like self-esteem. The young adults involved in this study shared the belief that confidence existed, involved emotion, was an enabler, and was generally attributed as being a desirable thing to have. As an outcome of their reflections an emergent definition of confidence was proposed, namely that **'confidence is knowing who you are, having pride in who you are (inside and out), and being able to portray who you are to others'**.

The young adults in this research project revealed a multitude of interconnected strategies for building self-confidence, and for supporting the building of confidence in others. As the researcher I was privileged to hear these insights first hand and recognized the potential value in this for schools. This has led to a recommendation that high schools routinely undertake exit interviews with their Year 13 students.

Dedication

This research study is dedicated to my family, Mike, Ben and Sarah. You have shared this entire journey from beginning to end, with love, patience, and whole hearted support. Thank you.

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Contents

	Page Number
Abstract	i
Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	ix
List of Appendices	ix
Chapter One - Introduction	
Introduction	1
The researcher's position	3
Chapter Two - The Research Question	
Introduction	5
The research question	6
Exploring the key concepts:	
• Introduction	9
• Confidence	9
• Young adult	14
• Successful	17
Operational definitions:	
• Introduction	18
• Successful	19
• Young adult	19
• Confidence	19

Chapter Three - Using an Ecological Framework

Introduction	20
Overview of the ecological framework	21
Other theories and perspectives that fit within an ecological framework and inform this research	
Introduction	25
• Social cognitive theory	26
• Developmental based psychosocial theory	28
• Resilience / strength based perspectives	31
• Human capital theory	33
• Social capital theory	34
• Social cohesion theory	35

Chapter Four - Cultural Contexts

Introduction	37
• Youth	39
• School	41
• Māori	41

Chapter Five - Research Methodology, Research Design and Ethical Considerations

Introduction	46
• Qualitative	47
• Ethnographic	48
• Interpretivist and constructivist	48
• Insider / outsider	49
• Critical realism	50

Research design	
Introduction	51
• Research context	51
• Sample group	52
• Selecting research participants	53
• Size and demographics of research participants	54
• Cultural considerations	55
• Focus group discussions	56
• Data collection	57
• Data analysis	58
Ethical considerations	
Introduction	59
• Informed consent	59
• Power differentials	61
• Anonymity and confidentiality	62
• Voluntary participation	63
• Potential for harm	63
• Potential for bias	64
• Conflict of interest	65
• Data protection	65
• Ownership of the research	65

Chapter Six - Research Findings

'Young adults share their thoughts'

Introduction	67
Section A : Theme – the concept of ‘confidence’	68
• Defining confidence	68
• Some examples of being confident	69
• The feeling of being confident	73
• Observing when other people are confident	74
• An emergent definition of confidence	76
Section B : Theme – ‘building confidence in self’	76
The contribution of :	
• Personal attributes	77
• Unconditional support, encouragement and belief	81
• School	84
• The wider community	89
• Success	91
• Sharing knowledge and skills	93
• Observing others’ decisions and life journeys	93
• Ethnicity	94
Section C : Theme – ‘building confidence in others’	98
Advice for adults:	
• Listen unconditionally	98
• Stay authentic	99
• Empathise with the age and stage of young adults	100
• Maintain respect	101

- Have a genuine belief, faith, and trust in the young adult 102
- Pro-actively encourage young adults to give it a go 102
- Acknowledge and celebrate achievement 103
- Be inclusive 103
- Believe that you can make a difference 104
- Provide constructive feedback 105

Chapter Seven - Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction	107
Discussion	107
Research implications	117
Research limitations	118
Recommendations	119
Conclusion	121

References	122
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List of Figures

Figure One - The nested layers of the ecological framework 24

List of Appendices

Appendix One - Question guideline for the cultural advisors

Appendix Two - Information sheet

Appendix Three - Letter requesting access to an institution

Appendix Four - Prospective participants

Appendix Five - Focus group participant consent form

Appendix Six - Authority for the release of transcripts

Appendix Seven - Transcriber's confidentiality agreement

Appendix Eight - Focus group discussions

Appendix Nine - Cultural advisors share their thoughts

Appendix Ten - Sample exit interview for level 13 students

Appendix Eleven - University Human Ethics Committee - Ethics approval