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Editorial Comment

Celebrating Connections, Old and New

Martin Stabrey



From left: Edwina Poynton, Coura Niang, Christine Gaitens, Joanne Fraser, Jessica Hadley and Martin Stabrey

Child and Youth Care folks have an amazing way of being able to nurture deep and lasting connections. And not only when working with kids. Whether it's working in daily practice or teaching CYC, meeting up again after a time apart always feels like we're one big family. And so it was when we gathered again in Dublin, Ireland for the Unity 2023 conference at the beginning of November. The last time the conference was held was in 2019, and for the next few years, Covid and its after-effects kept our family apart. We'd kept in touch online, but we know that's not the same.

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Opening Keynote presenter, Dr Sami Timimi

For two days of conference days (and two days of post-conference discussions) it was like we'd never been away from each other. Unity regulars were again (mostly) in attendance, along with many new faces – the leaders of future generations. It's been said many times before on these pages that CYC conferences and gatherings, local or international, is the tie that binds us. After being away from my Unity family for three years, all it took was a few days together to once again feel reinvigorated and inspired. And it's a time to meet the family members you didn't even know you had!

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Caitlin Dow

One of the conference highlights was the workshop by Caitlin Dow, *Accidental Damage: An Exploration of Educational Trauma in Students with SENDs, at the of hands people who were just trying to help.* Caitlin is a 17-year-old neurodivergent student who is working to improve the lived experience of SEND students by educating the adults that work with them and bringing their voices into Education and Council processes and service

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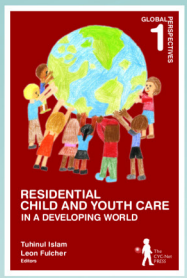
design. It was Caitlin's first-ever presentation, although we would never have known (you can see it here). She was truly inspirational. As Jack Phelan observed, Caitlin should be offering lessons on how to run a CYC workshop! Look out for Caitlin's webinar we will be hosting in 2024. (But first she needs to complete her A-Levels.)

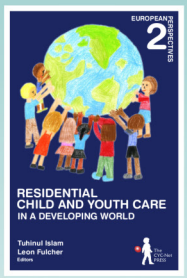
And it begs the question, why aren't more youth presenting at our events? We seem to be great at talking about kids: so why are we apparently so reticent in having them speak to us? It's not like we don't know how to find them. Or is it that they're just not being invited? Or is it, as I suspect, that we think they're somehow not "good enough"? The NACCW in South Africa make it their business to involve children and youth at their events. At their biennial conferences there are often as many kids present as adults. And they're not just hanging about: they participate fully. How often does this happen elsewhere? We're great at inserting ourselves into kids lives – how about we offer them the same opportunity. Caitlin's inspiring presentation at Unity is a salutary reminder to all of us of *Nihil de nobis, sine nobis* - Nothing About Us Without Us.

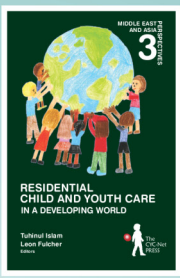
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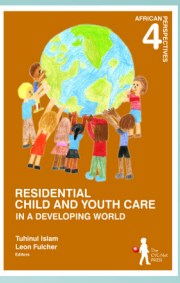
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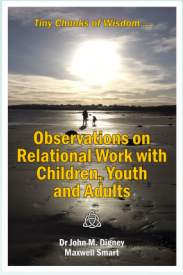


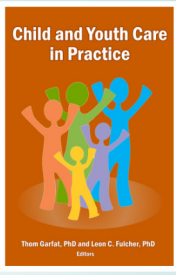


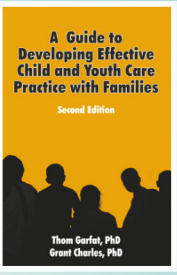


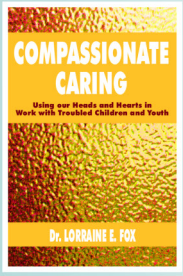


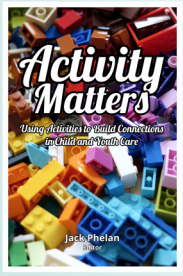






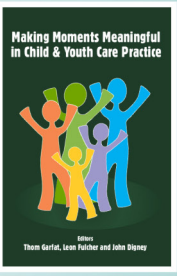


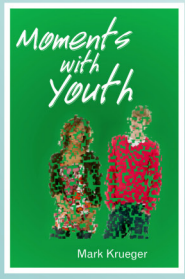


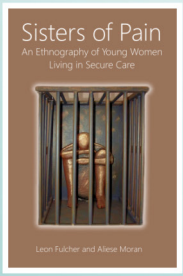


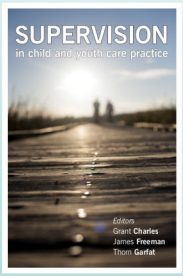


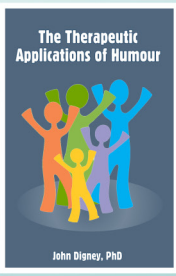


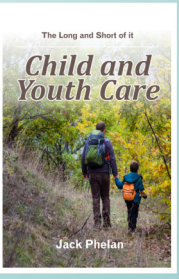












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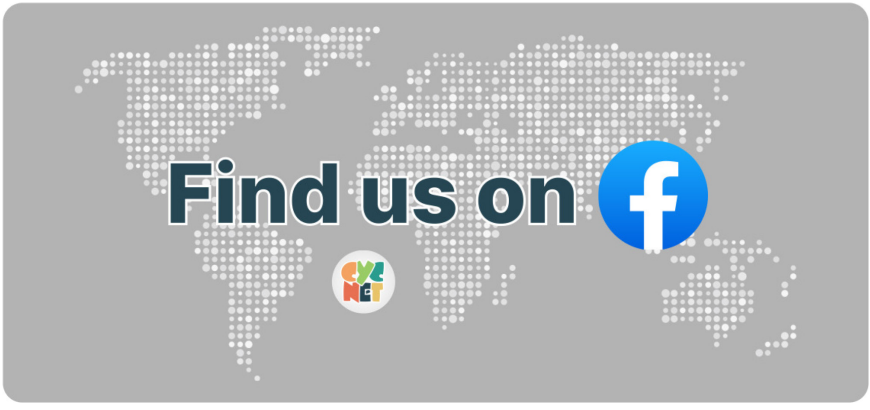
Will Santa Ride a Rocket?

Kiaras Gharabaghi

The airspace over Gaza surely is one of the most watched airspaces in the history of airspace surveillance. Anything that moves within that space has the potential to bring death and destruction; in fact, anything that has moved within that airspace has in fact brought exactly that to people either in Gaza or in Israel. As a result, one might seriously be concerned about that flock of reindeer that is made to ride across airspaces around the world each and every year around this time. Chances are they are going to get pulverized this time around, with chunks of Rudolph raining down on children to add to the already horrifying reality of what happens there. And yet, Santa's mission cannot simply be rerouted, leaving out children who probably need a miracle more so than most others.

Of course, we all understand that not everyone in the world celebrates Christmas. In fact, this year in particular, it is hard to imagine finding within ourselves a celebratory mood of any kind. The peacefulness, the family gatherings, the opulent food, and the carefully selected gifts for those we care about are far too obviously irrelevant in parts of the world where survival is the name of the game. But still, Christmas is known to just about everyone around the world, much like other Western brands such as Coca-Cola, Google, and Nike. And everyone knows that Christmas is supposed to warm the heart, sooth the soul, and allow us moments of joy and happiness

with family and other loved ones. This has never been reflective of everyone's reality. Homelessness, addictions, family violence, poverty, racism, police brutality, and many other ills don't take a break over the holidays. In the downtown neighbourhoods of Toronto, New York, and London, the destitute dislike Christmas because at the height of this holiday, the streets are empty and there is no one to ask for pennies, food, or cigarettes. The destitute want things to get back to normal as quickly as possible, even if normal means they live on the margins of society, with limited prospects for personal fulfillment. Even at those margins, however, life is still better than it is during the times when there just isn't anyone around. As long as there are people, traffic, open stores, and communities teaming with life, the destitute can connect, demand, request, swindle, or provide service to someone and receive something in return. Even in troubled spaces and troubled times, people can find ways to build on their strengths, their resiliency, and their capacity to persuade a passerby to reach into their pockets and share some of their wealth.



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As we enter this last month of the year, we will, inevitably as we always do, cast aside the absurdities and hypocrisies of unequal life chances; we'll conveniently overlook the coincidence of where and what sorts of circumstances we are born into and what life we therefore have access to; and we will utilize our resources to ensure that these last few weeks and days of the year are warm, joyful, and peaceful. It won't matter that war is raging elsewhere and that many people, amongst them large numbers of children, will experience neither warmth nor comfort. This is not the first time we have had to manage this kind of absurdity. I remember experiencing this absurdity from the other side in 1978, when the revolution in Iran had its most violent phase and December offered none of the usual charm - just fear, uncertainty, and scarcity. Ten years later, the people and the children of Romania may recall similar experiences, as their country made a violent transition away from its longstanding dictator to a somewhat more democratic form of government, with Christmas Day serving as the day of the dictator's execution. And here we are in the 21st century, knowing that there are brutal wars in several places around the world as we rejoice for Hannukah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa over the next few weeks.

Notwithstanding the tragedy all this poses to our humanity, December still is a month during which we tell our children of miracles, none more enticing than that old man from the North Pole riding his sled pulled by reindeer around the world and delivering joy and gifts. This story is of great importance to children in the global north, particularly those living in relative comfort. Santa is, after all, committed to all children anywhere in the world, and what is received by those with comfort and means is no different than what is received by those living in more dire circumstances. There is a certain legitimation of inequality that unfolds in this story, in part because what is being rewarded by Santa is good behaviour rather than social status (ironically, in some war zones, where it is especially cold in winter, the

consequence for bad behaviour – charcoal – would make for a better, or at least more useful, reward than the gift of a toy).

Most of the time, we can maintain the integrity of this absurdity by imagining that sled making the rounds on Christmas Eve and reaching children even in the direst of circumstances. Joy will be spread to all. This year, however, we have a particular problem to contend with that more than usual, renders questionable the science of the story and its probability of unfolding. We encounter the problem of children living in a closed war zone to which there is no entry and from which there is no escape. How will Santa reach the children of Gaza? With no land crossings, sensors deployed to monitor underground activity at all times, and an airspace in which anything that moves is shot at, the chances of Santa reaching the children of Gaza are slim. A sled pulled by reindeer, with an unfortunate red nosed reindeer likely facilitating detection by radar even more, is not a safe way of getting there. And if Santa just can't get there, our precarious balancing act of comfort at home in full sight of misery elsewhere falls apart. Christmas is at risk this year in ways that other calamities have not threatened it before. Santa must get there somehow to save our enjoyment of mashed potatoes and stuffed turkeys.

I suppose there is only one option, which escalates the absurdity of the world's conflicts to new heights. If we are serious about avoiding a reindeer BBQ for Christmas dinner, Santa will have to ditch the sled and ride a rocket, which seems to be the only thing that gets through the dense surveillance of that airspace. The sad part is that we will almost certainly prefer this option to another one, which seems to offer much more sustainable benefits to everyone involved. The idea that trapping people in small, cramped, confined territories with no way in and no way out ought to perhaps be questioned and rejected, requires far too great a miracle bordering on the fantastical. We are more likely to put the old man on a

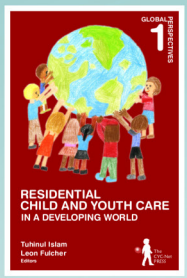
rocket to dish out joy and death all at once, which is good for reindeer and good for our hard-earned entitlement to moments of warmth and comfort far away from conflict and war.

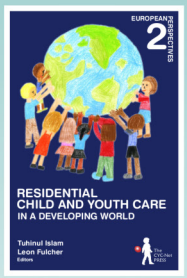
2024 is coming. Let us hope it will be a year during which we all remember the things worth fighting for. Children's rights seem like a good start. The right to be a child, to expect miracles, and to be protected from the naked ambitions of maniacal narcissists require us to speak loudly and clearly with and on behalf of young people around the world. The need for a North Pole-Military Industrial Complex partnership to keep the Christmas miracle going ought to remind us that we cannot afford to escalate the absurdities we have come to accept. We want children to look expectantly at the night sky for reindeer, not for rockets.

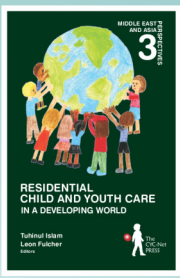
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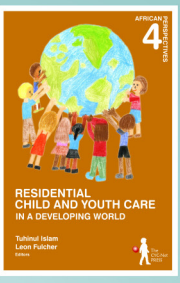






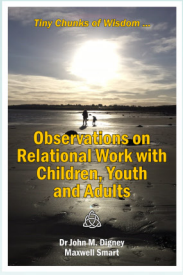


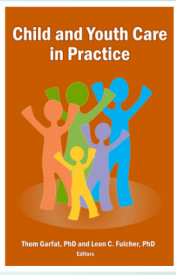


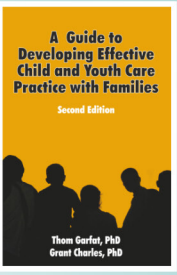


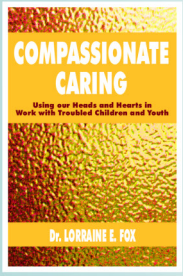


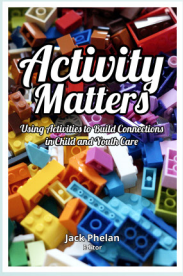






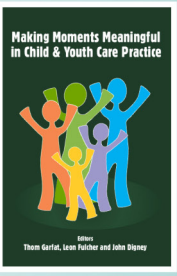


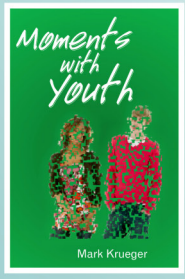


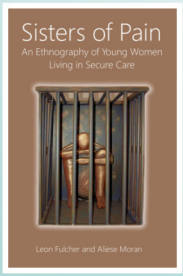


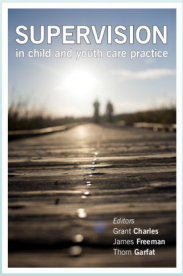


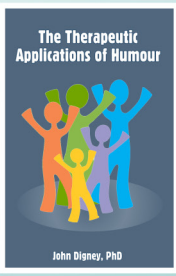


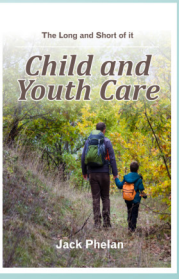












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“Becoming the Best Versions of Ourselves”: Supporting Foster Youth in Transition to Adult Life

Dr. Leah Wasburn-Moses and Lizzie Rumford

Abstract

Because of the chronically poor outcomes among youth aging out of the foster care system, studies in this area often adapt a deficit model. However, research shows that emancipating youth also display significant strengths and strong desires for their futures. The goal of this study was to document those strengths using a semi-structured approach. Using Hedenstrom’s (2021) framework on successful aging out, we present results of in-depth interviews of 14 young adults in one state who recently aged out of foster care. Findings showed multiple strengths and needs in this population, including the ability to find support and a desire to serve others despite limited time and resources. Implications for those involved in the foster care system are presented.

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Introduction

The primary goal of the child welfare system as "ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and youth whose families are not meeting these needs or protecting them" (McCartt Hess, 2014, p. 1). In brief, foster care is the system set into place to protect children whose families are unable to do so. Foster care was designed to be a temporary placement, as research has shown consistently the long-term negative effects of placement instability on a child's life outcomes. Creating and sustaining lifetime connections for youth whose lives have been disrupted in this manner is essential.

Unfortunately, despite the efforts of professionals, many youth never achieve permanency through this system, and end up living under what has been termed "long-term foster care" or "independent living" with accompanying services. Many states provide extensive transition services to youth who reach the age of 18 while in foster care, such as payment for living expenses, providing/paying for housing, and/or paying for schooling including higher education, but as with other support systems, their existence does not guarantee that all youth are able to access them or benefit from them equally (Courtney, 2009).

Outcomes for Youth

Unfortunately, outcomes for youth involved in the foster care system at some point in their lives are notoriously poor along nearly all measures indicating life success. In 2009, Courtney (2009) reviewed the results of 22 studies examining outcomes of youth who had aged out of foster care. With respect to educational attainment, studies have shown low high school graduation rates. Results of multiple studies show a 20 to 30 percentage

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point difference between graduation rates of foster youth and that of their same age peers. The studies also show significantly low rates of college attendance, with an even more pronounced gap between foster youth and their peers.

Health

Another important indicator of adult life is health, both mental and physical. Not surprisingly given their life circumstances, former foster youth have a much higher incidence of mental health challenges on a variety of measures, including rates of seeking assistance from mental health professionals, results of assessments intended to gauge mental health, and rates of admission to residential care facilities. There is mixed evidence comparing outcomes of physical health in former foster youth to same age peers. However, due to strained economic circumstances, studies have shown that former foster youth are more likely than their peers to be uninsured and/or have more medical issues because such issues are left untreated (Collins, 2014; Courtney, 2009).

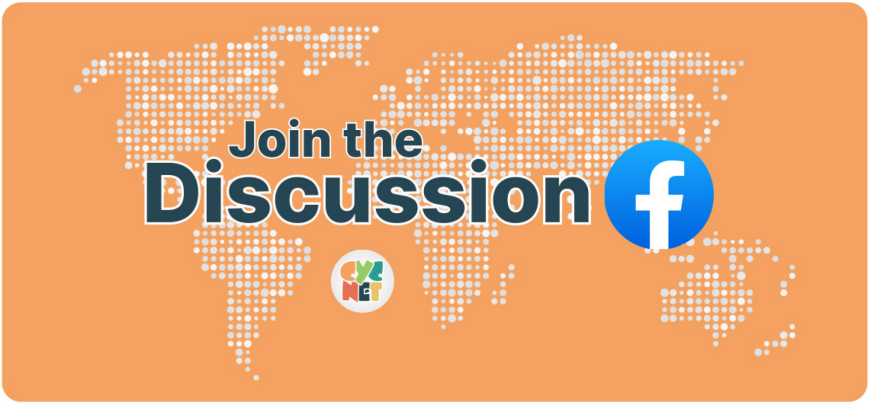
Substance Use

Studies focusing on substances use and abuse were also mixed, in that they generally show higher rates of drug and alcohol dependence among former foster youth than that seen in the general population. However, a clear picture of lifetime outcomes in terms of drug and alcohol use and abuse has yet to be determined. Unfortunately, former foster youth have much higher rates of involvement with the criminal justice system than their peers over their lifetime. They are more likely to be arrested, convicted of a crime, and incarcerated than the general population. Further, having a

criminal record impacts other indicators that are addressed in these studies, such as educational and employment outcomes (Courtney, 2009).

Income

With respect to employment outcomes and economic independence, studies have shown much higher rates of use of public assistance by former foster youth than in the general population. Higher unemployment rates and lower earnings have been documented in multiple studies over the years, including ones using large state and national databases. In general, many struggle with income insecurity in multiple respects, including insufficient funds to pay rent or mortgage, or other monthly bills. Income insecurity naturally impacts stability in housing as well. Significant mobility and housing instability is common amongst former foster youth, with many residing in multiple places within just months of exiting care (Courtney, 2009).



Family

With respect to family formation, studies show mixed results in terms of comparison of marriage and divorce rates, childbearing, and parenting, to the general population. In general, former foster youth appear to have more children than the general population, and most studies show poorer parenting outcomes than their peers. Also of particular note is early parenting among former foster youth, including single parenting. Children of former foster youth are more likely to have health, educational, and/or behavioral challenges than children of those not involved with the foster care system, and sadly, those children are then in turn more likely to become involved in the system.

After existing foster care, youth are likely to have significant contact with their families of origin, despite the obvious challenges stemming from past abuse and/or neglect. Ongoing contact among former foster youth with birth mother, father, and siblings has been documented over time. Again, outcomes are mixed in terms of type and level of support provided. Contact with former foster families is also common and may serve as a source of support. Perhaps not surprisingly, studies have shown that family strife continues to be a challenge for these young people after emancipation, and many lack even one adult to turn to for assistance, either material or psychological (Courtney, 2009).

Transition to Adult Life

Collins (2014) points out multiple reasons for the poor outcomes outlined above, including instability in the family of origin, socioeconomic disadvantage, and inconsistency in living arrangements. However, she goes on to write, “Yet, despite the serious risk of poor outcomes facing this

population, there is heterogeneity in both experiences and outcomes. Children and youth come into care for different reasons, have varying experiences in care, and bring a unique set of personal strengths and challenges in their individual development. Thus, a focus on resiliency has also been critical to understanding and intervening with this population" (p. 470). She summarizes previous research that has specifically applied the concept of resilience to this population, identifying protective factors such as intelligence, "steady" personality, persistence, and involvement in positive community activities. Hedenstrom (2021) notes the importance of using resilience theory in studying positive outcomes among this population.

Collins (2014) emphasizes the importance of multiple and varied types of social support to positive transition, summarizing the positive impact of multiple support networks, such as biological relatives, foster families, counselors, caseworkers, and "natural mentors," other adults who can offer advice and support such as neighbors, teachers, and extended "family" who may not be related by blood but still consider themselves family. Positive contributions of these support networks include lowered incidence of anxiety and depression. Further, youth who have had mentors in their lives for a long time show better outcomes than those who did not (Hedenstrom, 2021). It is important to note that "multiple networks," or support from many different individuals, was found to be critical in order to have positive and lasting effects (Collins, 2014).

Additional studies have shed more light on protective factors and positive interventions that have assisted foster youth in making successful transitions from foster care into adult life. An understanding of the adolescent's viewpoint with a focus on continuity and stability is essential (Rafaeli, Mangold, Zeira, & Kongeter, 2016; Singer & Berzin, 2015). Studies

have shown that many foster youth return to their family of origin after leaving care. This move is associated with findings of greater resiliency in young adults, despite the continued strife within the family that is common. Therefore, attention to maintaining those relationships, as well as planning for that transition, is more important than is often emphasized in the child welfare system (Jones, 2013; Mitchell, 2010).

Skill development is another important piece of successful transition to adulthood. In a summary of research on life skills training provided to this population, Collins (2014) recommended standardizing life skills curriculum in consort with evidence-based practices, and ensuring that all interventions be tailored to specific, individual needs. Providing concrete resources and increasing intensity of the interventions also appear to have a positive effect on outcomes. Other studies showed a positive impact of provisions of indepth training on financial management, helping youth make connections with agencies that can provide income support, job preparation skills, and training on employment and educational options (Barnow, Buck, O'Brien, Pecora, Ellis, & Steiner, 2013; Huizar & Lawrence, 2018). However, there are significant limitations in attempting to standardize curriculum and instruction, particularly with respect to the wide variability in youth needs and services offered in various communities, including job training, postsecondary options, mentorship programs, and mental and physical health services (Collins, 2014).

The Midwest Longitudinal Study found that those who stayed in foster care voluntarily showed significant improved outcomes on a variety of measures, than those who left care at the age of 19 (Courtney, Terao, & Bost, 2014). States offer a variety of incentives to youth and to foster families to encourage youth to stay in foster care during this crucial time in their life. However, when foster youth emancipate, they are solely

responsible for their own choices, which include decisions about where to live, what services to access, and whether they continue with their education (Collins, 2014; Courtney, Terao, & Bost, 2014).

Again, connections appear to be a crucial factor in successful transition (Hedenstrom, 2021). Getting involved in positive activities in the community can provide continuity and stability (Jones L.P., 2014). Continued education can also provide these outcomes, despite common and significant barriers encountered by college students from diverse and/or disadvantaged backgrounds. Armstrong-Heismoth and colleagues (2021) conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 young adults who aged out of foster care. They expressed the need for selecting support personnel who genuinely cared about their futures and would treat them with respect. They also mentioned the need for person-centered supports and the selection / choice of relevant activities that would benefit them. Peer supports from those who had recently aged out and social skills development appeared to be valued by participants as well.

Theoretical Framework

Given the negative outcomes described above, the goal of this study was to document strengths of this population, using a semi-structured approach. Interviews conducted for this study were based upon one of the few pieces of research dedicated to "what went right," an article published in Developmental Child Welfare by Margot Hedenstrom (2021) entitled "Aging out of foster care: The experiences of former foster youth who successfully navigated this transition." The goal of the study was to analyze the life experiences of youth who had successfully aged out of foster care, through semi-structured interviews. Hedenstrom interviewed nine young

adults who had “successfully” aged out of foster care and were currently 20 to 25 years old. Participants must have lived in a foster home for at least six months before emancipation. “Success” was defined as having completed high school or a GED, currently living independently, and currently employed or attending school. They were recruited through caseworkers.

Using a phenomenological approach, participants were asked to walk the researcher through their aging out process. Results of the study uncovered four themes that represented participants’ experiences as they entered adult life from foster care (Hedenstrom, 2021). The first theme, facing a transition, is about how participants felt immediately after turning 18 and technically aging out of foster care (state law says they can remain in foster care until 21 if they so choose). They discussed experiencing abruptness and limited support. They expressed significant pain regarding the struggles they had faced during that time. Those who reported a smooth transition were in kinship care and supported by biological parents and other relatives.

The second theme, depending on adults, involved both asking for support from important adults in the lives of youth, as well as accepting support offered. Adults identified by participants as helpful included caseworkers, foster parents, and other community members. The presence of just a single caring adult appeared to make a significant difference in their lives. Third, “making a difference” helped participants find meaning by assisting others, primarily with respect to current foster youth. This finding was unusual in that it had not been reported in previous studies on resilience. Several reported participating in organizations that support this population or who had aged out of care. The final theme, moving forward, addressed the ways in which participants were envisioning their futures. The fact that they had competed their education appeared to be a

significant positive note in their lives. They expressed the continuing desire for a better future in multiple respects, completing education, improving mindset and mental health, and setting goals. Although the first two themes were relatively common in the research literature, the author found few studies addressing/uncovering the last two themes, making a difference and moving forward. She recommended more research in these two areas in an effort to design interventions and programs that work (Hedenstrom, 2011).

As the goal of the present study is to document strengths in this population instead of using the deficit model found in much of the data, we selected the Hedenstrom model as the theoretical framework because it specifically focuses on the positive and attempts to uncover additional themes to explore in the effort to uncover "what works" in transition from foster care to adult life. In particular, we wished to explore the last two themes that have not been examined in previous research, and that appear promising in terms of life outcomes. For purposes of this study, we chose to look more broadly at youth who aged out of foster care, not just those who may qualify as "successful" along a continuum.

Methods

Similar to methods employed in Hedenstrom (2011), participants for this study were recruited from each of the 88 counties in one state, through each county's public child welfare agency's Independent Living (IL) Coordinator. The IL Coordinators were listed on a publicly available website run by the state Job and Family Services agency. Each IL coordinator was asked to forward an invitation to participate in the book project to foster youth who met these inclusionary criteria; (1) they had aged out of foster care; (2) they were currently aged 18-25. This particular age range was

selected to as to capture an accurate depiction of current practices in foster care. Some potential participants were later excluded because they did not fit the required age range. Additionally, social media posts were made on foster care support groups throughout the state in an effort to reach foster parents who might have connections with qualifying youth. Many of these support groups were attached to nonprofit agencies serving foster families. Because the techniques were the same as those used in the Hedenstom study (2011), through contacts with caseworkers and snowballing, the number of individuals recruited is unknown.

Qualifying individuals were asked to provide an email address to make contact with the researcher. They were then asked to provide their phone number to the interviewer, and sent the interview questions ahead of time, also via email. In their first contact with the researcher, via email and during the interview, they were provided with the approved university IRB informed consent form, which discussed confidentiality, including the use of pseudonyms and the changing of other identifying information that might be brought up inadvertently during the interview process. In order to gain a full understanding of helpful transition supports, two questions were asked in order to explicate each of the four themes identified by Hedenstrom in her study. The questions were designed to elicit information that would assist interested individuals in making decisions and designing programs that are perceived as supportive by youth with lived experiences in this area.

Data analysis was conducted using a deductive approach, as an extension of Hedenstom's (2021) work. The first researcher conducted and transcribed the semi-structured interviews, using Hedenstrom's themes as anchors. After transcription, the second researcher replaced participants' names with initials (pseudonyms) to preserve confidentiality. Next, both

researchers collaborated to sort responses to each theme, or group of two questions, into codes. Any disagreement about the codes, short phrases that encompassed multiple participants' responses to each theme, were resolved before coding continued. After the researchers agreed on each of the codes, the second researcher placed each of the participants' responses under the corresponding code. Direct quotations were preserved until write-up for the researchers' references.

Results

Twenty-seven young adults responded to our initial query. After recruitment, two individuals were screened out because they were over the age of 25 and one because she was from out of state. Ten additional individuals were unable to participate for one or more of the following reasons: (1) they did not reply to the initial query asking when they were available for the interview; (2) they did not show up to scheduled video appointments up to three times; and/or (3) they did not respond to multiple prompts via text and email. Fourteen individuals participated in this study, four men and ten women. All were between the ages of 19 and 23. This means that the study had a response rate of 51.9% Because of the need for confidentiality, demographics beyond age were not asked explicitly unless provided by participants during the interviews. Interviews took place online, and were videorecorded. Interviews lasted 15 to 45 minutes, and video recordings were deleted after transcription.

Facing a Transition

When facing transitions, participants provided multiple responses to describe that transition on a continuum, ranging from easier than expected

to very challenging. The majority of participants used words such as “rough” and “stressful” to describe their transition. They communicated that the transition was never linear and was a rocky road. While emancipation typically occurs at age 18, several participants mentioned delaying emancipation until the age of 21. Quite a few noted a lack of resources and information provided to them before emancipation. However, they also mentioned that in retrospect, many more resources were available than they knew at the time.

Three of the participants indicated that the transition was actually easier than anticipated. Those who felt their transition was fairly easy mentioned the existence of strong supports. CF stated, “it was a pretty easy transition, was a little stressful [though]. But it was pretty easy. There’s a lot of people that helped get me to where I needed to be and made sure stuff was done right.” SG said, “It was a lot easier than expected. Because in the beginning of last year, and like, the ending of last year, I lost both my parents, so I thought it was gonna be really hard leaving, but I’ve had a lot of sports and everything, I’ve had a lot of my family here for me, and it’s been pretty nice. Been easier than expected. I was terrified. Yeah.” To KL, the transition appeared easy for a different reason. She explained, “I mean, to me, really, it wasn’t nothing… I started off in middle school taking care of my sister. So it’s like to me it was already adult-ish. But like, you go from taking care of so much. And then I don’t know.” So to KL, transition did not mean much because of she had been the adult for much of her life.

More common were responses such as BW’s, “I’m making ends meet, but it takes a lot of work. So, financially, the transition was hard. It was very hard.” AA explains, “I was homeless a lot. And I had to get help from the state and stuff just to pay my bills just to get an apartment and stuff like that. It was hard.” Moving to multiple places even before transition was

more than norm than the exception, and per CP: “my personal transition, what from foster care to adult life was rough, but with like all of the different like foster families and the group home I lived in and just like all the experiences I had, between like transitioning to now I feel like it’s you know, made me the adult that I am today. I’m like super independent and I advocate for myself and yeah.” However, CP mentioned later that when she looks back she is able to see the positive long-term impact that this rough period made in her life.

KB addresses emotions undoubtedly felt by many: “I would say leading up until the day I emancipated out I was feeling it’s a bunch of different emotions, anxious, nervous, just worried about where I would go next.” MM also mentions all of the shuttling back and forth: “I’m gonna be honest, it was kind of rough …

Because the first two years, like being an independent living, I also had to like, go back and forth, checking on my siblings who were still in foster care as well. And had to deal with a lot of legal proceedings during that was well, for the reason why were in foster care.” In contrast to those who felt the transition was easier than indicated, those who communicated that the process was challenging referred to a lack of assistance received. For example, RW mentioned “a big gap period where I didn’t get any the resources I need or anything” and TW referred several times to completing the entire college application processes alone, including financial aid and scholarships.



As mentioned above, participants referred to shuttling back and forth among multiple living situations before their transition. Unfortunately, that trend continued after emancipation for most of the young people interviewed. FS explained, [it's] never linear in foster care. But my specific transition I technically aged out at 18.... And then at 21, I officially aged out, but during that time becoming an adult looked like paying my own bills at 18. ... and then the older I got, you know, I moved different places." She explained how rent kept increasing and living with fewer roommates as she got older meant her portion of the bills was higher.

Similarly, KB explained how the process of emancipation can be long: "I knew I had some money coming from... County Children Services for a stipend that I was going to receive, they already told me it's kind of a lengthy process, it can take anywhere from 30 days to 90 days, for even for me to get a court date for my emancipation.... Thankfully, it only took three weeks, but it took a total of four months for me to get the stipend, wow, four months, I really had to just kind of figure out where I was gonna go, what was gonna happen, I had a family friend that allowed me to stay with them." Many participants referred to timelines for receipt of multiple types of assistance being unclear in the first place as well as extended beyond expectations.

AA was forced to leave her current placement because of her baby: "I left my foster home and well I had a baby and my foster mom kept my baby because I was sexually assaulted. And that's how the baby to be. So I didn't really have any plans to keep her or anything like I wanted somebody else like that didn't have to go through that to have her so C kept her for a little bit and I went to live with my in laws that are proud of me, my ex in-laws, but they were my in laws at the time. And they gave me a place to stay.

They said that they wanted the baby and stuff. And one of the term of them to have a baby was for me to move out. I couldn't live there anymore."

Another participant, MM, also found herself pregnant at 18 and dealing with both emancipation and pregnancy and parenthood simultaneously. But unlike FS, she found a refuge in family friend. MM also praised her transition program and her transition worker, saying "I really liked that program, you could participate in like contests and when to win scholarships toward school. And they would give out like free computers or laptops. And you get like a worker, and I've got like a worker and a supervisor or something like that."

MM was one of many participants who noted lack of information and/or transparency about the process of emancipation/transition and available resources, particularly financial resources to provide specifically for living expenses. Many times this lack of information appeared to cause significant stress in multiple respects. EO explained, "When I turned 18 I just aged out and I wasn't aware of any of the services that like you could get in foster care you know, like having them help pay for college or housing. So I moved back in with my parents and I paid my way through college by myself. EO expressed pride in having no debt or student loans despite this lack of support. Similarly, KL expressed, "I wish I would have known and understood about how many resources was out there to actually help me because there was enough resources, where I could have paid my rent and pay like I didn't even know how to run an apartment when I transitioned out."

Sometimes the information young adults reported lacking did not appear to stem from lack of knowledge about provided supports, but just from lack of adult guidance in their developing years. For example, BW explained, "I just wish I had more knowledge but I guess it's like, experience. I guess I

have to learn it by going through the experience." How to fill out various forms of government paperwork was mentioned commonly in terms of what youth felt they missed.

KB discussed her process of applying for housing, which was particularly challenging with a child: KB's caseworker sent her links to HUD resources, one of which was within walking distance. She writes, "thank God, I think it's because I filled it out as and see, once again, that's a trick question… the way they're looking at it is Is your roof over your head? Or you just bought a couch kind of situation? So I you know, I asked the lady at the front desk, actually …. And they're like, well, technically that's considered homeless …. And they actually bumped me up on the list and I got a call in three months."

Like KB, some participants reported getting that type of assistance to assist with transition. For example, CP stated, "In that time of transition with my independent living worker, I, we created like a way to [have a] really comfortable relationship like she was only like, a few years older than me, but she was still like, respectful. But she was ready, she was really helpful. And she taught me how to like, sign for leases, and stuff and look for apartments and like housing, she taught me about credit, taxes. I'm like cars … what's better, like within renting or buying a car, or buying it …. Stuff you have to like, learn as you reach adulthood, I guess."

Depending Upon Adults

When going through challenging times in their transition out of foster care, participants reported relying on many different individuals to provide various types of supports. Some of these supports originated in foster care, while others were sought out as a result of experiences with foster care. Participants shared that their supports included birth parents and families,

those considered family although not related by blood, foster parents, and caseworkers. They also spoke of spouses and important friends in their lives. A few participants also communicated that school personnel and mental health professionals provided that much-needed support.

In this particular Midwestern state, independent living services for emancipating foster youth are mandated from ages 18-21. Several participants specifically mentioned these services, including classes, financial and other material supports. For example, MM's caseworker kept her updated about transition opportunities for which she qualified. MM and BW refer to the same organization. BW stated, "I'm thankful for the organization….they are my main support, they helped me with school. So [my caseworker] helps me with other things like helping get my car insurance paid…. And [another organization] which kind of helped support my housing while I'm in college, so those two are great support."

Several mentioned previous caseworkers as primary supports. These results are not a surprise because many of the participants were referred to this book project by independent living caseworkers. KB also referred to a previous caseworker when asked about supports: "My caseworker that I ended up getting during my case plan or my time in foster care. Her name's Hallie and we are still in contact after seven years.

She's still in my life because she was always there. She was my advocate. She spoke up for me in court vouch for me. She believed in me, even when I didn't believe in myself. She always loved me as if I was her own child. I wasn't I didn't feel like I was just somebody on her case plan…. She took time to like get to know me and my son and helped me like, out of her own kindness."

Similarly, TW explained "My caseworker is a very active support. In my life, she will answer like 12 [AM], if I'm calling her, she cares about me like

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I'm her own son." Interestingly as one of most traditionally successful of the interviewees, in terms of completing college and identifying future goals, TW went on to mention nearly all of the supports identified above: "And I talk with my biological mother a little but I wouldn't say she's a main support. And then of course, the agency as well. And my best friend, I always say, and I'm trying to keep this outlook in life is that you want very quality support and friends in your life."

A few participants expressed that they had been motivated to seek out various supports as a result of their time in foster care. BW named a "homie mentor, she kind of supported me a little bit she even sometimes will financially support me." Similarly, as a result of a residential placement during foster care, SB also mentioned her Big Sister with Big Brothers Big Sisters "where they bring in these people and they would, you know, interact with us. And so I still have contact with her. And she actually just came up here a couple of weeks ago to see me."

CP mentioned the state Youth Empowerment Council as a support. She describes this council as consisting of "foster youth who have aged out or who are close to aging out of foster care advocate for other youth as well as themselves. So like the rest of our, you know, brothers and sisters in care. And so we have a say, in what laws, you know, are like created, and what should be done, what shouldn't be done, what should be changed and stuff." Interestingly FS mentioned bosses as supports during her transition.

Birth / biological families were mentioned consistently throughout participants' responses when they were asked to identify major supports. Mothers, siblings, aunts, uncles, step aunts, step uncles, and others who are or are not biological relatives were identified. Interestingly, few referred to difficulties with biological relatives, although KL did state, "I mean my mom has always been there for supporting and though she is messed up so

as like everybody else in a way....at the same time, moving around so much, I also feel like no one wanted me or cared for me."

MM praised the woman she calls "aunt," who is actually her half-brother's mother: "she's always been there for me, especially like during the year I emancipated and I was pregnant with my daughter. Like, she took me in, because after they emancipate you from independent living, like they're not going to pay your bills anymore." SB also referred to her birth mom for coming to her aid during a time of crisis, when she was able to move in during her pregnancy.

Apart from birth/biological families and those considered to be relatives, many of the participants mentioned obtaining support from spouses and close friends. For example, AA explained that her husband "was my best friend when we were teenagers. So he just kind of stayed there. But that's the only person I still have. Honestly, I don't really have anybody else. Besides our daughter... but she is not here yet." TW spoke of a best friend who helped him stay positive during challenging times: "I'm trying to keep this outlook in life is that you want very quality support and friends in your life." When asked about supports, participants appeared grateful for the friends they mentioned.

Several different types of professionals also made a difference in the lives of these young people, including teachers, guidance counselors, and mental health personnel. CP referred to a guidance counselor dedicated to assisting with the transition to college. She also mentioned receiving more support from school. "As in like, I see a therapist. I also like, school, like, there's a health office, so I'm able to, like get doctor's appointments done there."

Others referred to therapists and mental health professionals as significant supports. EO stated, "My therapist [is my support] because not

because I pay her but because yeah, it helps that she doesn't want to go anywhere um, she's very consistent like she has my trust. I don't really trust super easily so you know, byproduct of that. FS's therapist has also "been great. [I] recently went back to her and it's just, you know, picking up like we never picking up right where we left off. And it helps because I don't have to re-explain everything, she already knows my history. So it makes it that much more authentic and genuine."

Teachers also played a part in support, both school and university. TW explained, "My best friend is a graduate assistant... He's helped me not only like, change my life and like, what I want to be when I grow up who I am, but also has given me so many opportunities ... so super thankful for his part and kind of transitioning into becoming a full adult and knowing who I am, what I want, and also just cultural awareness." EO describes a complicated relationship with a high school teacher who was instrumental in helping earlier on in his transition but was unable to continue later.

In sum, participants described multiple types of supports, appearing to lean heavily on those connected with foster care as well as birth families. Some supports came out of foster care and some from related services. They appeared to be grateful for the people in their lives who supported them.



Making a Difference

At first, many of the participants indicated they did not provide service to others, but once they were reminded that service does not have to be a grand gesture, they were able to think of supports they provided, such as helping out with housework. Participants gave some examples of giving back that included the jobs they hold, whether traditionally "helper" positions or not. They appeared to value the concept of giving back. Some were giving back to populations with which they identified, such as LGBTQ+ or homeless youth, as well as foster youth. Further, the questions led some participants to share their philosophies of life and/or what they had learned from being in foster care.

When prompted to think of service in a broader way, the emancipating youth provided several concrete examples as to how they felt they gave back to the community. AA mentioned working for DoorDash, Instacart, and Chipotle. CF mentioned giving friends rides, and DP referred to helping around the house: "I just tried to contribute, like, anything I can do if it's like how little it can be like simple ways like picking up a few things or whatever." Others also mentioned picking up around the house. Other examples include helping with a child's Girl Scout troop, mowing a neighbor's grass, picking up trash, and giving money to church or charity to benefit people and/or animals. For example, SB explained, "I don't know it just makes me feel good to help other people because like it just it could make someone's day maybe their weekend like holding the door for someone."

Several indicated it was hard to find time to give back, as per MM's comment "So I'm gonna be honest, I work a lot. And the most service is for my kid. Yeah. If not my time I do give my money. I like I have my account set

up where I leave, donate 50 bucks to this church on a weekly basis that I attend to every so often. I don't attend faithfully because I work night shift. And when I work, I can't really sleep and go to church. So but what I donate to them every so often, and then I try, like every time I see like a donation option, like I try, I tried to donate because with my time, it's kind of harder to give it away because you only have so much dedicated to my daughter and my work sometimes to my husband." BW also mentioned helping out family: "I support my brother. I've always helped him out. Um, so yeah, my brother and my friend. And like, I tried to be there for her kids. They're like, my god kids. So that's pretty much the main the main people I tried to give back. Yeah."

This question led several participants to reflect on their philosophy related to helping others, as reported below:

BW: That's, that's pretty much like my motto. You know, growing up, I didn't have a lot. So I've always looked out for other people since I was really really young. You know, whether it's giving snacks at school or a couple of dollars there. Um, like right now. I'm actually helping my best friend. I'm at the hospital right now. I have to take a bit emergency room. But she's okay.... Um, I believe like the karma, you want to put good things out there are good things can happen to me, because I know that I don't really have, I don't have a big support system.

EO: I decided very early on that like, I wanted to be someone who gave back to other people and part of being like homeless the mentality is you give what you have to others because you need to do that to survive. And like, even though I'm not homeless, anymore, that mentality has stuck with

me because I without that, like, I wouldn't be here. So now for me, I'm like, I have resources, I have education, and I want to give it back.

KB: Yeah, my favorite saying is like, once I looked back on it is that once I opened one door, a million more doors were available to me, I just had to get the courage to open that one door. And nowadays, technology is so advanced, you can click on one site and end up on a billion different things …. You got to tell your story. You have to speak about it…It's those good to let it out. It's like I've been holding something in for so long and it just needs to be said so yeah, I'm really I'm really happy that I got to experience some of those things that happened that encouraged me to do what I'm doing today.

TW: People when they look at me, they don't, they don't see all of these stories, the adversities I had to face. They see a very white presenting gay, flamboyant, confident, sometimes annoying person and they don't really see behind the mask of how much emotional processing I had to do to get to this point, as well as the emotional processing that I'm still dealing with today…. During my transition, it really made me understand the value of how, like, honored I am to get these scholarships. I don't want to use the word privilege in the sense like, Yes, I am.

Several participants mentioned particular ways they help people like themselves. TW assists with independent living classes for foster youth. Two participants participate in state-level committees attempting to address foster care. CP is involved in the Youth Empowerment Council… [I got involved because of] all the experiences like I had in [foster care], and

like, what I saw went wrong, and what I wanted changed for myself. I see that, you know, reflected into like other from other children, and care."

Similarly, KB participates on the state Foster Youth Advocate Board, representing teen moms in her county: And right now I'm in the middle of making a teen mom video for the foster care page that we just finished last month… Honestly, I have my struggles I have my days. So just kind of telling my story and giving back to a teen mom like myself. That's really what I'm there for." RW also participates in a state-level advisory board.

Other participants mentioned volunteering with church youth group and raising money for an LGBTQ+ emergency fund. EO named a variety of services: "So I'm actually doing kinship care right now. I work in domestic violence. Shelters, I run a couple of groups pro bono for self harm LGBTQ individuals. Anger management, I have an incest group. I do Midnight Run, we do clothing [and feminine hygiene drives]. And I've also been working with the CAC nearby to try to make that more inclusive in our area. Awesome."

Finally, one participant also mentioned giving back to society through her career as a healthcare worker.

Moving Forward

Looking forward, the participants were asked to share their future goals. Some indicated they did not have long-term goals, because they had learned to live day by day. The most common theme in terms of a

long-term goal was to live in a stable home. Other shared goals were primarily financial, including owning a car and achieving financial stability. Furthering their education was also identified by several participants.

Finally, getting help was a theme in multiple respects, either finding ways to improve their own health and/or assisting others in obtaining

various types of assistance that they may need. Some shared multiple goals, such as EO: “I am hoping like, something can either change in some direction where like, that lessens itself a little bit. Whether that means like, they’re more comfortable here or like, my parents get their shit together, I don’t know, don’t care, something works out. Want to get a partner? And I [get a] house; pretty typical developmental milestones.”

To begin, some participants declined to share goals, saying they did not have any and explaining why. For example, KL stated, “I never really had any goals. It’s just I live day by day. A lot of I don’t know, and from MM, “Like, what can I do now to make the next moment easier for myself? Like surviving, but with a bit more mystery.” She continued by detailing, “It’s very general, like I just want my future to be peaceful and happy. And I know I can’t make that happen without taking it a step at a time.”

By far the most common goal shared by participants was to live in a stable home, including each of the three participants who were also parents. For example, AA explains “Hopefully get an apartment. That’s a big one. Because we don’t have an apartment like we stay in extended stays.... [another goal is] don’t let my kid go to foster care... Because my kids not going to foster care, especially as a girl. No, that’s not happening.”

Several expressed the desire to own a home instead of renting, as MM describes: “I want to move out of this house. I hate this house so much..... move to a nicer house, I kind of don’t want to be in kinship care anymore.” KB situates this desire within larger goals and connects it to her experience in foster care: “But meeting the people that I met crossing paths with different families and just seeing how I went through six different homes that’s six different people’s lives and all those people lived completely opposite lives. So just being able to stop in and experience that life. kind of

gave me an idea of well what I want to do, who do I want to be when I'm in this position?"

The next most commonly expressed goal was financial stability overall, or the ability to make a specific large purchase such as a car. Several participants mentioned a goal of job promotion or "leveling up" at work. Some of those appeared quite satisfied with their current status in that respect. AA stated: "like keep my car up to date. I guess like not letting it break down. Keeping my job that I have right now. Like I'm kind of in a good spot." FS explained "I think if I want to just be bright eyed and bushy tailed, would love to be the director of the department one day…But um yeah, I just, I'm gonna be kind of chugging along and see where this takes me."

Each of the current college students expressed the explicit desire to graduate as a crucial goal. BW credits foster care with getting her into college in the first place: "If it wasn't for foster care, I feel like, if I never went in too far secure at the age of 16, I wouldn't be I wouldn't ever have went to college… I will probably be struggling. So I am grateful. We're, you know, to be able to take advantage of some of the things that comes along with it. But I probably wouldn't even know what I want to do with my life and have those experiences."

RW explained: "I've always been an artist, and I still am. I'm actually an art major…. If you don't want to go to college, you don't have to, of course, but honestly, I want to start a business for my art." TW, who expressed the most elaborate goals, described wanting to open his own nonprofit theater as well as become a lawyer and become involved in politics. "I want to also be a working lawyer and then run for public office, starting with Mayor then State House representatives, and then possibly governor, but I'll be skipping governor, because once we come working for the National House of Representatives, I do want to go to DC that's the goal."

Finally, the desire to get help and/or give help to others in in a similar situation was apparent throughout the expressed goals of several of the participants. For example, BW stated: “But knowing how like car my housing situation has been suffering out of the foster care system, I would like to eventually look into creating some type of housing for, for use, like after [foster youth] emancipate.” CF explained that foster care “has helped me by [showing me] what I have to do in order to be successful, and what I have to do in order to be able to move up and my job and if I foster care just helped me or it’s given me the opportunity to meet different people to help me along the way.”

CP explicates how foster care influenced her to work harder and change society’s expectations for youth in foster care: “My experience in foster care has influenced me to like where I am right now… as well as to like, break the… toxicity in my family. And that negative stigma that there is on the system, you know, because foster youth are portrayed, like, in the media, and seen in the system as, like, helpless and like that we’re disadvantaged, which is like completely not true. We are fully capable, you know, of like doing things and like having jobs and having real relationships and conversations and having a real life, you know, and we’re not like, poor, disadvantaged kids, like, we are fully capable of becoming like, the best versions of ourselves that we can be in the best people we can be. And so that, you know, has inspired me and influenced me to continue achieving my goals and continue to like, work hard.”

Similarly, KB explained her journey and goals as one of growing strength: “I think foster care was meant to happen…. There was a song that crossed my mind a lot while I was in care, which was Carrie Underwood, Temporary Home. … And so foster care for me, taught me how to be on my own, solely without any family without any support solely on my own. And it gave me a

light opened my eyes and I also got to learn myself during that time I had so much time to myself. And a lot of time with my son that we established a relationship that I don't think ever could ever be broken."

Discussion

Transitioning out of foster care appears to have been a winding journey for the participants in this study, including both strengths and hardships, and often multiple moves from place to place. With respect to the research aim to uncover what factors assisted with transition, people appeared to act as crucial supports, many of them serendipitously entering the lives of transitioning foster youth. Knowledge was also important at the right time, both knowledge specific to foster care, such as how to apply for transition supports, as well as general life knowledge, such as how to pay taxes. Finding stable housing that meets their needs was also viewed as pivotal to this population. Finally, expanding on Hedenstrom's (2021) previous work, giving to others also appeared to be important to this population, particularly in small ways. We as a society should consider how to provide opportunities for giving back to this particular population of youth.

The road that is transitioning out of foster care was not linear for the majority, if not all, of the participants. They described multiple hardships such as homelessness, lack of stable income, lack of knowledge about crucial resources, figuring out single parenting. However, many different types of people were crucial to assisting them in figuring out the solution to many of the challenges they faced. The crucial role of mentorship in the lives of youth emancipating from foster care has been well-documented in past research and is further supported in this study (Collins, 2014; Jones, 2013; Mitchell, 2010). Some of the mentors mentioned by participants were

put into their lives by foster care, such as foster parents and caseworkers, but many were not. Support provided by birth families was significant, including extended family who might not be related by blood. Many of these supports could be seen initially as having a relatively small role in the youth's life, such as a guidance counselor, but this initial contact sparked a larger relationship. This serendipity in locating mentors should be explored further.

These mentors that were identified by these youth did not just provide stability in terms of housing or finances, but they were a source of knowledge, both specific to foster care and general. Many of these youth felt that they missed out on opportunities provided by the state to transitioning foster youth due to lack of knowledge about the system. Many also expressed confusion and frustration over procedures and paperwork they felt was general knowledge to young people who had a more stable support system. Again, the need for connection to support systems is well-documented in previous research, particularly research that calls for life skills training for emancipating youth (Collins, 2014; Barnow, Buck, O'Brien, Pecora, Ellis, & Steiner, 2013; Huizar & Lawrence, 2018).

Housing itself appeared to be of great significance to this population. It would be easy to draw the connection between their current desire for stable housing to lack of stability in their past. However, one element that might be overlooked in this discussion is the element of choice. They do not just desire stable housing, but housing that they chose, that feels like a home to them. This desire extends previous research, in that choice of housing is worth investigating in terms of its potential for being a protective factor for youth.

Hedenstrom (2021) urged future research to investigate further the new finding regarding the importance of "making a difference" as a strength

factor for youth emancipating from foster care. The results of the current study extended this work. This population expressed the desire to give back to their communities with which they identified, both the foster care community and other communities with which they identified, such as teen moms or the LGBTQ+ community.

One unexpected finding of this study is that participants' responses to questions about "making a difference" included acts like helping a neighbor, washing dishes for a relative, babysitting, or providing services to the community like DoorDash. Their responses indicated the need to consider "making a difference" more expansively, which could potentially assist in identifying strengths more accurately. Many if not most participants expressed the lack of time to give back, although some were clearly giving back in major ways such as through statewide committees. More opportunities specifically designed for this population to use this strength to give back to the foster care and related communities in multiple ways should be considered.

Implications

Finding individuals who are willing and able to make a long-term commitment to supporting a foster youth in transition is a crucial goal. Taking the extra step by delving into each aspect of the youth's life may uncover the one support that may make all the difference in the future in terms of stability and outlook on life. As discussed in previous research, birth families and extended birth families should not be overlooked in this process, as well as caseworkers who may no longer be officially involved in the youth's life (Collins, 2014; Jones, 2013; Mitchell, 2010).

Existing ways of providing general and specific knowledge to transitioning foster youth do not appear to be sufficient. State resources

may be comprehensive, but they are not fulfilling their purpose if youth are not aware of those resources. Finding new ways of documenting what services are needed for transitioning youth and getting that information to this population in a way that meets their needs is crucial. Previous research has recommended standardizing a curriculum as a first step to meeting this need (e.g., Collins, 2014); however, the variety of needs of the youth combined with variability in community resources and personnel make this plan difficult to implement.

This study showed that choice in housing may be particularly important to this population. Supporting housing stability in this population should make sure to include the goals and desires of the youth involved (Collins, 2014).

State agencies and other organizations supporting foster care should consider developing ways to include young adults who have transitioned out of foster care in their work. The results of this study pointed to the importance of starting small, thinking creatively, and involving the potential volunteers themselves in designing opportunities to give back. Allowing busy youth with hectic lives the ability to participate in multiple ways that suit their needs and communication preferences could result in strengthening both populations. Giving back is seen as a positive in the lives of emancipating youth as well as allow young people to see that there is a way forward after foster care (Hedenstrom, 2021).



Limitations and Conclusion

It is important to note that participants should not be considered a representative sample of young adults who aged out of foster care, partially because of the small sample size and the fact that youth were only included from one state. Further, the sample should be considered skewed because of how participants were recruited, through Independent Living coordinators and through former foster parents. Because participants were recruited through individuals employed in the foster care system, they were still connected in some way to these individuals, and those with fewer connections were less likely receive the invitation to participate in this project. We know that former foster youth with more connections tend to fare better in terms of life outcomes.

The research design further limits the strength of the results. The design was based on findings of a previous study focusing on protective factors of emancipating foster youth. Both studies were qualitative semi-structured interviews and lacking a quantitative component. Qualitative data coding by its nature can introduce bias, and particularly with the different researchers involved in these two studies, a direct comparison should be viewed with caution. Despite these limitations, participants provide insight into some of the strengths, challenges, and unique journeys of youth emancipating from foster care.

In conclusion, participants in this study described multiple ways in which their life paths differed from the traditional expected path of finish school, get a job, start a family. Their lives were uprooted by moves, changing family circumstances, and more. They showed strengths in making connections with a variety of people, adapting to changing circumstances, and expressed a desire to give back to communities with which they

identify. Implications for policy include the need to identify how valuable information is provided to emancipating foster youth, and to provide for opportunities for choice for housing. Important implications for practice include looking expansively to identify and cultivate mentors, and creating pathways to partner with youth so they can "give back" in ways that meet their needs for agency.

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Networkers

Doug Magnuson

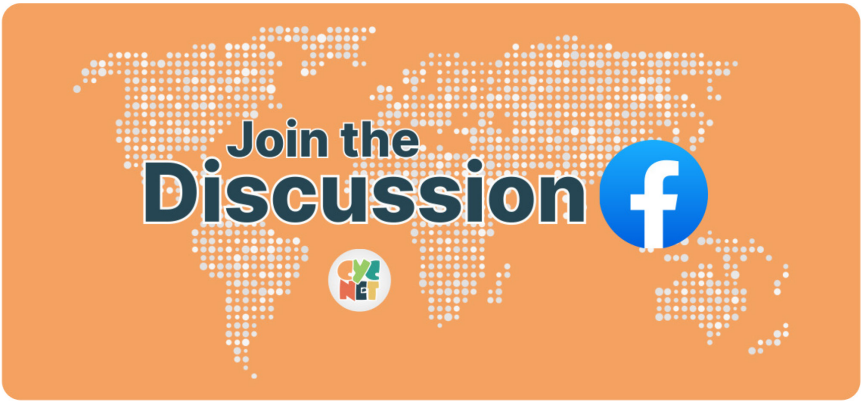
Recently I chaired an M.S. defense in Physics. The student spent two years building a classification model for thousands of interstellar objects, the conversation was stimulating and the project interesting and useful. Twenty or so fellow students also showed up, interested in the study and interested in supporting their colleague. A paper based on the study has been submitted to a prominent physics journal.

This experience contrasts sharply with the direction of research in the helping professions for youth, particularly social work and child and youth care, where there is less and less interest in either learning from youth or in studying the effects of practice on youth. Increasingly, theses and doctoral defenses have no youth participants or very few. Sometimes students do "auto-ethnography," studying themselves rather than young people. There are descriptions of fancy theories for interpreting data, but the theories are not used with their data, where they are usually simply reporting back what young people told them. Most theses in the helping professions are confirmations of what the student thinks they already know rather than discoveries.

Something similar is happening to practice. Agencies are given contracts for a service and no money is attached for evaluating that service. Practitioners are often not familiar with the research in their practice area; they did not learn about it in their professional training, nor did they learn

that it was important to know about it. What they do receive in their education are numerous opportunities to “self-reflect” and “self-locate,” and they learn the importance of “self-care.” They know the importance of listening to youth, but the person they spend most of their education listening to is themselves.

This “inward” turn in education and practice encourages vulnerability to fads, charismatic sales pitches, and false intuitions. Most worrisome, in my opinion, is the lack of curiosity about the explicit and implicit effects of one’s own practices on youth. Curiosity is often replaced by a fundamentalist certainty about one’s beliefs and practices, despite the absence of evidence. Pretty websites and fanciful anecdotes are strategically provided, but few public or private agencies provide links on their website to any evaluations or research based on their program. They claim “gold-standard” quality but no gold-standard research is found.



There is a lot of pretending. Mike Baizerman, of the University of Minnesota, asked the question, sometimes rhetorical, “In what situation would we call a youth worker?” How one answers this question communicates volumes, and there is much pretending that because one cares about children that one is important. Some skepticism might be useful.

Some of these problems are evidence of “presentism,” the assumption that historical figures were misguided or evil and the belief that our own intentions are pure. For example, one assumes that historical figures knew they were doing harm. This is doubtful. A small number did, of course, but most thought they were doing the right thing. Today most of us are certain that historical practices are bad but that current intentions and practices are morally good, but there is not that much evidence for this claim. Bruno Bettelheim was a brilliant analyst of practice and a brilliant wordsmith, e.g., “Love is not enough.” Spectacular language, but it turned out that children were being manipulated and physically abused in his “laboratory school,” because they didn’t always conform to his theories. He was certain, but there was no oversight or evaluation, because his claims, his stories, and his good intentions were thought to be enough evidence.

Good intentions and pretty words are not enough. To claim expertise without basing this expertise in careful study, research, and professional evaluation and, increasingly, without any real experience is arrogant. Too many educators are sending students into the field with little understanding of the settings in which they work, with no idea what effectiveness means in that setting, no idea about the research literature, and armed with a handful of keywords. What they have are endless strings of citations but few to none of those citations have any data.

In education the modern home-schooling movement grew quickly in part because teacher unions claimed that only they knew how to teach. They were wrong, mostly. CYC and Social Work (with youth) educators claim expertise about practices they have never seen, much less studied, and practitioners obtain jobs in fields based on assumptions rather than facts about what they know. It is not a surprise that the turnover rate is high, as practitioners discovered belatedly, they know very little.

The Physics students demonstrate the value of serious efforts to understand the world. Instead of focusing on themselves, Social Work and Child and Youth Care might think about studying the complexities of the lives of children and youth and the relevant practices - if they want to be taken seriously.

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Editor's Note:
During November we heard the sad news of the passing of a South African Child and Youth Care pioneer, Jakes Jacobs. Below is a tribute by **Francisco Cornelius** delivered at his funeral.

A Tribute to Jakes Jacobs



The passing of Jakes Jacobs came as a shock to many of us. Some of us are sad, some disappointed because we never knew of his ill health or struggles … but then again, if we had the time, we would have been more visible and present in his life? Whichever way it is, it is still

very difficult for us to accept that he passed on to the other life with our Lord, as he is considered to be still young.

The feeling of loss and separation is never easy to deal with but the fact that there are many family members and friends around who offer support in this time is a consolation.

Jakes had many chapters in his life with us. I would like to share one of those with you that I and a few thousand children and Child Care Workers had the privilege of sharing with him.

My first meeting with Jakes as a Child Care Worker was at a conference in 1989 that was held at Cape Town High School. What attracted me to him was his loud, convincing, yet cheerful voice. You never could tell if he was angry or just firm … but he just had a way that drew you closer to him. He was a man of immense stature with both adults and young people. If ever there was someone who could swell a crowd, it was Jakes.

He was a pioneer on many fronts, but for us in the field of Child and Youth Care his contribution to the development of policies and programs for young people at various levels of care, but more specifically for children living on the streets, will be remembered.

He was a member of the Western Cape alliance for children living and working on the streets, as well as a leading figure in training staff working with children living and working on the streets in and around Cape Town.

Jakes saw the changes in legislation on two occasions over the last 35 years. When South Africa became a democracy in 1994, and again in 2005 with the establishment of the current Children's Act 38, 2005. He had an audience with the very first democratic Minister of Welfare Ms Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi and in 2003 he was an active member of the team preparing children living on the streets to be part of a delegation who would present to parliament on the much-needed changes in the outdated

legislation that is now contained in the current Children's Act. A voice for the voiceless, many would say, and indeed a loud voice at that.

The unique combination of Jakes and his wife Nita, and their children was not uncommon in the field of Child Care back in the 70's, 80's and 90's. Many couples were employed with the wife playing the dominant role as house-mother in Children's Homes. However, where Jakes and Nita worked it was providing care and protection to children and young people who would drop in at the shelter because of the harsh conditions they experienced daily on the streets for a wash, a meal and shelter for the night. Many of them would stay for short periods and would roam and move from place to place. If there were children who stayed longer it was because of the interventions by the staff of whom many were not necessarily trained, but learned on the job. And Jakes and Nita were of these dedicated people who would go the extra mile for these young people, who trusted them and shared many intimate stories of their lives with them. Nita and her children would teach them beadwork and creative arts and other life skills, while Jakes would try to help the young person who is heavily intoxicated to take in a meal and wash so that they can at least get some sleep tonight. They were absolutely dedicated to try and help these young people get some direction in life, and they were walking the walk, step by step with them until crazy hours of the day and night. Many times, Jakes had to intervene when Law Enforcement agencies abused these young people, violating their human rights. He was their representation.

Jakes was a member of the National Association for Child Care Workers until he retired from active duties as a Child Care Worker. He then served on the executive of the Western Cape Regional Community either as the Youth Representative or as a honorary member. He attended almost every conference that I can remember. Since 2003, Jakes was one of the

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organisers of the Youth Forum and Youth Leadership and he took young people to conferences across the country every second year. It was just extraordinary that he was elected to do this as he was always the oldest person there. And this earned him the title of Papa Jakes - I should say, a title well served too.

For those of you who remember the 2010 Soccer World Cup (in South Africa). Jakes was on call 24/7 during that period accommodating children on the streets. He was visible and present when law-enforcement agencies threatened to chase these young people away from the action. He was also key in the arrangement of the street children's own soccer tournament and many of the youngsters then travelled overseas to the international street children's soccer tournament more than once.

Jakes was (excuse the pun) a Jack of all trades. At our mini- and National conferences he would always jump in to stack chairs, arranging the flowers, to cooking and anything else needed at the time. The only thing he didn't do was drive … but he was the life on any road trip, with the journeys eventful and pleasant - and never boring. During the conferences he would lead drumming or singing and even if his voice was already hoarse, you will hear his shrieking amongst the crowd, both clowning and serious.

I would like to read some of the messages from our colleagues in the field:

> 'Farewell my brother, you showed your love, dedication to most lives. I'm one of them. Your face, your smile showing your heart, I only saw the same, I never saw the other side of you. May your soul rest in Peace. This man was a father to all, calmed and comforted us in all our problems. We used many stories from him, telling us where the child care field came from, to where it is now as a profession, that empowers me and allows me to continue in

the field. Goodbye, we will see you in the future, you will never come back to us, but we will come to you. Condolences to Nita and the children, rest in peace.'

'This is indeed a sad morning, but he will be fondly remembered for all he did. Fly high with the angels' brother Jakes.'

'Papa Jakes, you are now one of our angels watching over us. Sad that I won't see you on this earth any longer, but I am assured we will meet again. Safe in the arms of Jesus my Papa.'

'Jakes will always be in our hearts. Lalangoxolo Papa Jakes'.

'Papa Jakes, I learnt so much from you. He was passionate about the work he did with young people. He will be remembered fondly'.

'His favourite words were: are we together?' Oh Jakes.

'He showed me the ropes when I started doing street outreach and working at the Drop-in-Centre at The Homestead in the early 2000s. He always used to say, Os is mos Jacobs'. Farewell my friend.'

Jakes really taught us a thing or two, gone but never forgotten to be with Coleridge.'

My en Jennifer se conference maatjie … jy nou by haar, nou gaan jy en Jen darem childcare doen daar bo.'

> ‘Jakes devoted his life to saving countless youth from the street as a mentor, a caregiver, and as a rod of protection and of acceptance. Jakes was a brave pioneer, a leader who enabled the development of projects, people and places to blossom. It is his legacy, his hard work and his huge heart that gave real hope and a sustainable future to so many. We owe and are most grateful to Jakes, who so gently and yet so purposefully lead us all to a much richer life. Rest in peace dear friend. Paul Hooper’

On a personal note, Jakes was a brother to me and my family. I knew him as a teenager in the streets of Retreat. He was a man of stature. He was always so neatly dressed, and no one would even suspect that he worked with young people who lived on the streets. My wife and children along with Ruth travelled a few years ago to the funeral service of Harold, another Child Care stalwart who lived in George, and Jakes treated everyone in the van as if we were blood relatives. My wife and children fondly remember that trip as if it took place yesterday. He would ask me to remind him of their birthdays, and when I did, he would send messages of blessings and love to them all. That’s how I know him, the caring loving big brother. And I am sure I speak on behalf of so many child care workers across the country.

His jovial personality stretches beyond boundaries, entertaining and enjoying entertainment. Like me, he loved singing and crooning when we had the chance at conferences. And of course, at the conference ball, he would sneak away from the youth and join in the fun at the main conference venue.

His God given talents drew people together and most of you will agree with me when I say that his life was about praising God through all his love

and care he had for his family, friends, neighbours, and colleagues across the country and possibly the world.

He was an advocate for children's rights, he was a pioneer for the professionalisation of the Child and Youth Care Workers, he built a workforce, and he paved a way for young people in the country.

The words of the song by Boyzone with the title 'No matter what' that he sang with me a couple of times has a special meaning in the work we do with children and young people who are at risk and vulnerable. I quote an exert from it that goes like this:

"And I will keep you safe and strong.
And sheltered from the storm.
No matter where its barren
A dream is being born.
If only tears were laughter
If only night was day
If only prayers were answered they we will hear God say
No matter who they follow
No matter where they lead
No matter how they judge us
Ill be everyone you need.

On behalf of the NACCW and the many professional Child and Youth Care workers and social workers who interacted with Jakes during his life time, the Director's Merle Allsopp, Zeni Thumbadoo, Donald Ngonyama, The National Chairperson Elwin Galant, I want to sincerely thank you Nita and your children for allowing us to share Jakes with us - as a colleague, friend, father and brother.



His memory will live long in the history of this country especially in the field of children's services. It is already written in the books and journals. You can be proud of him, and we certainly share that with you.

Nita, as a Child and Youth Care Worker yourself, your dedication and commitment and unselfish care for the many children who lived on the streets over the years, will not be forgotten.

May God continue to bless you and your children.

Love you.

Education and Care: How Teachers Promote the Inclusion of Children and Youth at Risk in South Africa

Lorna Balie and Yusuf Sayed

Abstract

Children and youth at risk, particularly those placed in child and youth care centres (CYCC) in South Africa, have suffered from school disengagement due to multiple barriers to learning such as the exposure to crime and violence at a young age. As children and youth at risk at these centres find it difficult to engage in learning, new approaches need to be found to re-engage their interest to learn. This article discusses how the 'Curriculum of Care', an adaptation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), responds to the educational needs of children and youth at risk at a CYCC in the Western Cape. It draws primarily from interviews and a focus group discussion with the centre manager

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and teachers at the institution. The findings reveal that positive learning outcomes, and the effective integration of children and youth at risk, are shaped by positive teacher–learner relationships; however, the findings raise questions about the extent to which such a curriculum prepares children and youth at risk for life after they leave the institution. The article suggests that the institutions providing education and care for children and youth at risk need to provide a curriculum balancing academic rigour with care to promote a holistic, inclusive education programme that enables youth and children at risk to effectively navigate their entry into society.

Keywords

inclusive education; children and youth at risk; curriculum of care

1. Introduction

Inclusive education is crucial to enable all learners, particularly children and youth at risk, to access an academic curriculum. Children and youth at risk experience various forms of school disengagement such as disengagement from the curriculum and teachers, often resulting in them leaving school early[1] (pp. 4–5). Inclusive education is an approach that could re-engage learners to access education through an appropriate curriculum and teaching and learning processes.

Children and youth at risk in South Africa are learners under the age of 18 who have dropped out of school and are generally referred for placement in a child and youth care centre (CYCC) by the Children's Court, under the provision of the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005[2]. These children and youth are then legally acknowledged as, "in need of care and

protection", which in this study are identified as 'children and youth at risk'. These facilities (which for the purpose of this article are referred to as institutions) are intended to address emotional and behavioural problems by providing appropriate education, therapeutic care, and in many instances, even residential care.

The Education White Paper 6: 'Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training system'[3] (referred to herein as White Paper 6) outlines the plans for an inclusive education system for children in general, and also children and youth at risk who experience emotional and behavioural barriers to learning or who suffer from emotional and behavioural disorders (EBDs). Babedi[4] (p. 79) suggests that these learners have unmet developmental needs in the "physiological, moral, social, and emotional domains", which have resulted in behavioural and emotional problems including aggression, a disregard for cooperation, and a lack of respect for authoritative figures.

Alongside these behavioural and emotional problems are concomitant academic difficulties faced by these learners[5] (p. 430): High truancy rates, discipline problems, low academic performance, and grade repetition. These escalate into school dropout and detrimental associations with anti-social peers[5] (p. 430). Studies show[6,7] that learners with EBDs have a 50% greater chance of dropping out of high school than their peers. To counter these problems, it is imperative to understand why these learners drop out of school, what intervening support to offer[8] (p. 383), and how to adapt the curriculum to compensate for their more difficult emotional and behavioural contexts while still maintaining curricular standards. It is the latter which this article focuses on by analysing the curriculum in use and enacted in a particular institution in the Western Cape, South Africa.

While extensive research has been conducted on inclusive education for children with disabilities[9,10] and on curriculum, there is a paucity of

knowledge about how the mainstream curriculum is best applied and modified at a specialised institution. Relatively few studies[5] have shown how children and youth at risk are catered for and included within the education system through specialised institutions and adapted curriculum, especially within the South African context. This article aims to answer this question: How does an adapted curriculum promote the educational inclusion of children and youth at risk? This research intends to share approaches for re-engaging children and youth at risk in the learning process by investigating an adapted curriculum called the 'Curriculum of Care' and its implementation by the teachers at a CYCC in the Western Cape.

2. The South African Policy Context for Children and Youth at Risk

White Paper 6[3] makes provision for curriculum differentiation to accommodate learners of varying abilities, including those with learning barriers such as EBD, a lack of qualified and trained teachers and inclusive policies; and a lack of parental involvement and support[11,12]. Many of the children and youth at risk in this study dropped out of their respective schools due to the barriers to learning recognised above. If inclusive education were implemented, it is suggested, these children and youth would have a greater likelihood of staying in school and completing their education.

Curriculum differentiation is core to inclusive education: Teachers adapt the curriculum to suit the needs of individual learners. Different teaching and learning styles and multi-level teaching are encouraged in an institutional environment such as a CYCC. The 'Curriculum of Care' o*ff*ered at the CYCC, as an example of curriculum differentiation, is an adaptation of the South African national curriculum, the Curriculum and Assessment

Policy Statement (CAPS). The 'Curriculum of Care' offers the same subjects as those offered in mainstream and other inclusive schools, with additional technical subjects such as woodwork, welding, arts and crafts, and bricklaying. In this way, it focuses on the holistic development of the child or youth.

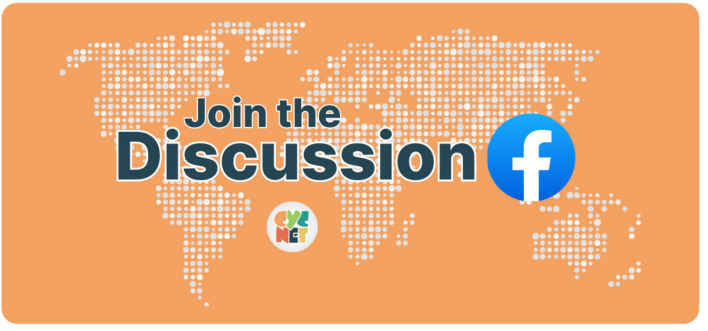
Presently, schools in South Africa are categorised according to levels of support and specialisation in relation to the nature and extent of learner needs. Some of these institutions are overseen by the Department of Social Development (DSD). The DBE or Provincial Education Department (PED) and the DSD work in collaboration at some of these institutions, where the DSD oversees these institutions while the DBE or PED provides the educational programme. The DSD is responsible for funding the CYCCs and ensuring an even spread of CYCCs are located throughout the country. An even distribution of CYCCs throughout the country is critical, as children benefit from institutions in close proximity to their schools and families for reunification. Overall, inter-sectoral collaboration is encouraged to support children and youth in overcoming the array of challenges that prohibit their inclusion in education and society.

Children and youth with specific learning needs and requiring intensive support will find services at special schools and CYCCs that are intended for critical educational support[3] (p. 21). Special schools are "schools equipped to deliver education to learners requiring high-intensive educational and other support, on a full-time or part-time basis"[13] (p. 50). Special schools, according to White Paper 6[3], are to be resource centres of expertise as part of the district-based support team supporting schools in the area.

Relatively few of these kinds of institutions exist for this purpose in South Africa, including in the Western Cape[14] which is one of the reasons this article examines the unique curriculum o*ff*ered by this particular

institution. This CYCC comprises the management team, teachers, childcare workers, education support service professionals, residential care staff, and volunteers. This particular CYCC provides residential care as well as therapeutic and development programmes to children and youth. Furthermore, learners are exposed to an academic curriculum, an array of technical skill activities, and a plethora of extracurricular activities.

This CYCC, located in Cape Town in the Western Cape, was established in 1948 as a school of industries when the National Party came to power. As a result, the school developed within a racial paradigm. The institution formerly catered for 'coloured' boys who were considered indigent and had welfare and social needs[15] (p. 13). Today, this institution serves as a special school: The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) oversees this CYCC and funds the education component. The institution currently admits males between the ages of 8 and 18. In exceptional cases, learners stay beyond the age of 18 if additional support is required or if they would like to complete their education. The institution makes use of the positive youth development model called the *Circle of Courage*, owing to the institution's education and developmental model, where care practices are embedded in all its programmes.



This institution plays an important role in providing care and education for children and youth at risk. In order to do so, it carries out a particular admission process and relies on the support of an interconnected departmental arrangement as this institution deviates from mainstream, inclusive, and fully inclusive schools, and in many ways from secure care centres and other childcare centres. But even so, the institution embodies characteristics similar to each of these different types of institutions. A maximum of only 70 children can be admitted to the institution at one time, owing to resource and financial constraints. The institution has several departments that function collaboratively: A school governing body, a senior management team (institutional management and governance), administration, laundry, kitchen, residential care, education support services, an academic department, and the technical department.

Delivery of the 'Curriculum of Care' is sensitive to the needs and educational pace of the learners. Drawing from the Circle of Courage, the curriculum assumes a holistic developmental approach to education, focusing on the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical development of the youth. This holistic learning comprises academic, technical, and vocational training, and extracurricular activities such as sports and arts as components of the broad curriculum experience. The next section will discuss key debates surrounding an adapted curriculum for children and youth at risk.

3. Teachers and Curriculum — Keys to Educational Inclusion: A Review of Literature

This section develops the inclusive educational environment framework of this paper paying attention to positive teacher–learner relationships to ensure e*ff*ective curriculum implementation, and discussing an appropriate curriculum for children and youth at risk.

3.1. Positive Teacher-Learner Relationships as a Pre-Requisite for Curriculum Implementation

Teachers are vital in determining whether learners receive the best educational experience and feel included[16,17]. A teacher's primary role is to deliver the curricular content through appropriate teaching methods and with supportive material. Part of their role as teachers, especially for learners struggling with EBD, is to provide psychosocial support by identifying behavioural problems, possible causes, and potential interventions to counteract the problems[4] (pp. 82–83). Babedi[4] (pp. 82–83) found that, "teachers are able to offer psychosocial support by following the eco-systemic approach". This involves caring teachers who listen to learner. In other words, a holistic, relational, listening approach should be taken to support learners involving community members, care professionals, and parents. It is essential, therefore, that teachers collaborate with all parties and in particular care professionals to provide both psychosocial and academic support for learners, especially those struggling with EBD[4] (pp. 82–83).

According to Downey, educational resilience is strongly connected to the relationship learners have with their teachers: "At-risk students need teachers to (a) build healthy interpersonal relationships with them, (b) focus on their strengths to increase positive self-esteem, and (c) maintain high, realistic expectations for academic performance, as well as have a positive attitude, emphasise the value of e*ff*ort to reach success and provide adequate support"[18] (pp. 57–58). Teachers are pivotal in influencing academic success. Teachers, for example, need to believe in their students, as learners need at least one adult who supports them and serves as a role model. The argument that mutual bonds of belief by teacher and learner and teacher support lead to academic success is supported by findings in

Mampane's[19] study about how inclusive education can facilitate educational resilience.

One study has shown that caregivers at a residential care institution tend to have low expectations of the youth, even lower than the youth have of themselves. Most youth, however, see the value of having higher educational expectations placed on them[20] (p. 1151). Downey[18] (p. 56) listed factors that contribute to positive academic outcomes: "(a) High academic standards, (b) incentives and rewards, (c) appropriate feedback and praise, (d) teachers' modelling of positive behaviour, and (e) o*ff*ering opportunities for students to experience responsibility, success, and the development of social and problem-solving skills". Teachers' academic expectations and their manner of relation and support for learners substantially impact student academic performance. The culture of learning provides the opportunity for learners to fulfil both academic needs and emotional needs through caring relationships. It has the potential, then, to address both behavioural problems and academic performance[21] (p. 339).

Downey[18] (p. 60) argues that learners who are at risk could succeed if they are involved in group activities involving cooperative learning and cross-age tutoring, because learners at risk would be able to work with others and build a supportive system within a learning context. In this context, learners who are at risk can develop life, interpersonal, and transferrable skills, including communication skills, stress reduction skills, and conflict management skills. When learners realise that all these skills will eventually benefit their future occupation, it bolsters their confidence and sense of hope for the future[18] (p. 61). All teachers working with learners at risk should be provided with support and training, especially as teachers who are highly e*ff*ective significantly impact the academic achievement of learners at risk. But teachers must be competent to give support as well[11] (p. 17). Once a healthy teacher–learner relationship is established, the next

step is re-engaging the learner in learning through an appropriate curriculum.

3.2. Finding an Appropriate Curriculum for Children and Youth at Risk

Curriculum is defined and designed by educational authorities. The way in which it is presented to learners by teachers influences the learners' experiences of inclusion and exclusion in the learning process and in institutions of learning.

A study by Hallam et al.[22] (p. 61) found that implementing what they saw as an 'appropriate' curriculum that meets the needs of learners, and using motivational assessment procedures that encourage learning, led to learner re-engagement and reduced discipline issues. They found that this 'adaptive' curriculum improved attendance and reduced dropout rates. Decisions on the kind of curriculum to o*ff*er learners are frequently contested depending on the context and agendas of those involved in curriculum design[23] (p. 153). Burrow and Milburn[23] view curriculum in terms of the totality of children's experiences at school[23] (p. 154), similar to the 'Curriculum of Care' implemented at the CYCC.

The 'Curriculum of Care' offered at the CYCC is influenced by the values of the Circle of Courage, a positive youth development philosophy. The Circle of Courage, developed by Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern[24] (p. 131) based on a child-rearing philosophy of resilience[25] (p. 22), has formed a large part of the philosophy behind the CYCC and its 'Curriculum of Care'. It is a resilience model which presents universal and essential human needs that transcend time and place. The human needs and transcendent values underpinning its philosophy—mastery, independence, generosity, and belonging—lend this model suitably into any context as its values are relevant across time and culture[25] (p. 22).

The Circle of Courage was first implemented at a special school in New Zealand, Mt Richmond Special School, where learners faced a plethora of learning needs from serious disabilities to expulsion from mainstream schools owing to bad behaviour. After teachers had been trained in the Response Ability Pathway (RAP), similar to the Circle of Courage, they reported that the school's atmosphere resonated with more positivity and happiness, positively uplifting student behaviour. One teacher even reversed his view on his children's ability to solve problems after this RAP training[26] (pp. 21–25).

There is a consilience of evidence with other positive youth development theories such as Self-Worth, Maslow's Hierarchy, and Positive Peer Cultures, confirming that what is most needed for human beings to flourish coincides with the four values advocated by the Circle of Courage[27] (p. 13). Evidence suggests the following: Secure attachment develops autonomy and eventually altruism towards others; children who have someone who believes in them are more likely to overcome adversity; not meeting the need for belonging has both physical and mental health consequences (prominent among youth of colour); social exclusion disturbs intelligent thought, self-control, and empathy; and excluded groups do not perform well academically, display antisocial behaviours, and su*ff*er further exclusion as a result[27] (p. 13).

The values underpinning the Circle of Courage at the CYCC have a major influence on the 'Curriculum of Care' implementation with learners: The void from the absence of these values is filled. In summary, this literature review suggests that to understand educational inclusion for learners experiencing EBD, positive teacher–learner relationship combined with an appropriate curriculum influences the capability and likelihood of children and youth at risk to re-engage in the learning process. This framework may help to understand the educational process needed by

children and youth at risk, and thereby contribute towards supporting children and youth at risk's cognitive and a*ff*ective development within an educational context.

4. Methodology

This article draws on data collected from a doctoral study undertaken between 2016 and 2019 on the social and educational inclusion of children and youth at risk. Drawing from this data, this article focuses on the approaches to re-engage and include children and youth at risk in the learning process by considering an adapted curriculum called the 'Curriculum of Care' and its implementation by the teachers at a CYCC in the Western Cape of South Africa.

This particular child and youth care centre was selected because there are not many like it in the Western Cape and in South Africa. It also has a unique approach to education and uses an adaptive curriculum for children and youth at risk. Desktop research and the research participants confirmed that this kind of institution does not exist elsewhere in the country nor are its methods applied at other institutions, as the 'Curriculum of Care' was coined at this institution as reported by the participants. This study used a qualitative case study research design to examine the curriculum o*ff*ered at a CYCC and its implementation by teachers.



4.1. Participants

A variety of participants, including the centre manager, teachers, the education support services staff members, and an academic participated in this study. A brief overview of the participants is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of the participants of the study

Participant	Pseudonym	Sex	Subject Area(s)	Time Teaching / Working at the Institution	Other Relevant Information
Centre Manager	Mark	Male	N/A	30 years	Mark has a background in educational psychology
Teachers with Whom Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs) Were Conducted					
Teacher 1	Melanie	Female	Afrikaans and Tourism	11 months	Melanie has previously taught in mainstream schools.
Teacher 2	Cindy	Female	Mathematics	7 months	Recent graduate / Newly Qualified Teacher.
Teacher 3	Lionel	Male	Motor Mechanics	30 years	Lionel studied Diesel and Motor Mechanics and worked at a motor dealership. He wanted to impart his knowledge to children and decided to study law.

Teacher 4	Adam	Male	Welding	17 years	Adam previously worked at a reformatory school for boys for 13 years.
Teacher 5	Gordon	Male	English and Life Orientation	17 years	Gordon previously worked at a reformatory school for boys.
Teachers Who Participated in the Focus Group					
Teacher 6	Lisa	Female	Afrikaans	27 years	Lisa retired during the study. She was the Head of the Education Department.
Teacher 7	Muhammed	Male	Natural Science and Economic and Management Science	22 years	Muhammed previously taught and retired during the study
Teacher 8	Steve	Male	Mathematics and Social Sciences	40 years	Steve retired due to an illness. He previously taught engineering science and technical drawing.
Teacher 9	John	Male	Life Orientation	26 years	John used to be an educational psychologist.
Teacher 10	Rashied	Male	Afrikaans, Mathematics, Tourism	35 years	Rashied retired during the study and was replaced by Melanie.

The Education Support Services (ESS) Staff					
Educational Psychologist	Clinton	Male	N/A	10 years	Clinton is part of the school management team and runs the ESS department at the institution. He previously worked at a similar institution that was, however, closed down.
Occupational Therapist	Faye	Female	N/A	7 years	Faye conducts developmental and scholastic assessments, and grade placements.
Participants External to the Institution					
Academic	Carol	Female	N/A	N/A	Carol specialises in inclusive education.

The table above shows the pseudonyms used for the participants in order to protect their identity, the type of participant, their sex, the subject area in which they teach (only relevant to teachers), the number of years they've been teaching or working at the institution (if relevant), and any other additional and relevant information about the participant. The number of years participants worked at the institution is counted up until 2017; the year when the interviews were conducted. Fourteen people participated in the study.

4.2. Data Collection

This article draws primarily from three semi-structured interviews with the centre manager, a focus group with five teachers, semi-structured interviews with five teachers (different to those in the focus group) from di*ff*erent subject areas (academic and technical), a semi-structured interview with an academic who specialises in inclusive education, a semi-structured interview with an educational psychologist, and a semi-structured interview with an occupational therapist. The interviews with the five teachers were supplemented with semi-structured classroom observations of teachers' (those who were interviewed) classes — one to three times, each depending on teacher availability and suitable times in their schedules. These classes included a Tourism class and an Afrikaans class (three observations in total as both subjects are taught by the same teacher), a Mathematics class (three observations), the Motor Mechanics workshop (three observations), the Welding workshop (two observations), and an English class (one observation). The few observations in some cases were due to fieldwork limitations such as absent or unavailable teachers. The findings will therefore only focus on the Tourism, Afrikaans, and the Mathematics classes as they were observed the most and illustrate how these teachers engage their learners in learning. It is also important to note that there is one teacher appointed per subject area due to the small number of learners at the institution. The scope of this study also does not focus on providing comparisons of teaching methods across subject areas.

4.3. Data Analysis

The interviews lasted between 20 and120 min and were audio recorded. Most audio files were transcribed verbatim, and all transcripts and some audio files were uploaded onto a qualitative data analysis software called

ATLAS.ti. Open coding was used to organise and group data. The concepts, themes, and sub-themes were analysed through an interpretive lens to understand the meanings and teaching approaches within the context of the CYCC[28] (p. 9). Excerpts from interviews illustrate the main points of the findings, with participant names anonymised to protect their privacy. This research is aligned with a critical theory perspective seeking to contribute towards a society, and education within, which is equal, equitable, and socially cohesive[28] (p. 51), especially for vulnerable children and youth at risk.

4.4. Ethical Permission

Ethical permission for this study has been obtained from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) (Ethical Certificate Number EFEC 1–9/2016 and 20160810–3094) and was valid between 13 September 2016 and 12 September 2020. The ethical permission secured indicated that all interviewee participation was voluntary; all interviewees gave their informed consent and were free to withdraw or refuse to answer any questions they were not comfortable with. The ethical permission secured indicated that none of the data collected for this study would be made publicly available.

5. Findings

The findings below draw from the various interviews as well as observations of the teachers implementing the 'Curriculum of Care'. It is interpreted within the framework developed earlier, which considers how the institution re-engages children and youth in learning, and how they balance and navigate the imperative of care alongside the need for education. The findings show how the curriculum is implemented by

teachers at the institution to re-engage children and youth in the learning process. The challenges of balancing care and education are highlighted, along with the implications of this dual role as teacher and caregiver.

5.1. The Values and Approaches of the 'Curriculum of Care' for Children and Youth at Risk

Before the 'Curriculum of Care' is described, it is important to understand its origin. The 'Curriculum of Care' is arguably a response to the rigid national curriculum that responds inadequately to the educational needs of those children and youth who experience emotional and behavioural barriers to learning. The CYCC does not suggest that the CAPS curriculum is not an important curriculum; CAPS is recognised, however, as not suitable for all learners, as evidenced at the CYCC. By adapting the national curriculum, the CYCC strives to promote educational inclusion. The centre manager notes why they developed their own curriculum at the CYCC:

> "So, the Curriculum of Care is one that we coined many moons ago of almost bringing into check the pressures from the provincial education and district departments to say, you need to set targets around that. Kids need to be able to do this and all of that. We're not saying that's unimportant. But if mainstream has really failed these kids and we're duplicating mainstream, then what is our purpose? We need to be seen to be doing more for the kids and their families". (Mark, Centre Manager)

In Mark's opinion, the 'Curriculum of Care' is an attempt to achieve more than the mainstream schools with children and youth at risk. This curriculum not only relates to children and youth in terms of their learning difficulties

but sees them as whole persons with various needs. In celebrating the learners as 'whole people' the curriculum aims to be holistic.

The 'Curriculum of Care' is framed around the idea of the holistic development of children and youth. This holistic development comprises academic, technical, and vocational training, extracurricular activities, and sports and arts as components of a broad curriculum experience. Furthermore, the CYCC provides psycho-social support for the children and youth who have experienced trauma or are in need of counselling. Children and youth are certainly not viewed rigidly as young people with knowledge deficiencies and skill gaps. The 'Curriculum of Care' responds acceptingly to the whole child. This holistic development is also supported by various other parts of the system: Teacher practices, the professionals at the CYCC, the school policies and culture, the parents and members of the community.

> "Your education has to be holistic from the word 'go'. You cannot look at any kind of purely academic, or technical, vocational, or didactic kind of practices. You've actually got to enrol the child into a kind of learning which includes all of that". (Mark, Centre Manager)

Mark describes how the 'Curriculum of Care' is a curriculum of experiences with a combination of plans and experiences, where experiences make room for unplanned events and encompass the totality of learners' experiences at school[23] (p. 154).

As part of the holistic and broad curriculum experience, the 'Curriculum of Care' is underpinned by the values of the Circle of Courage, a youth empowerment approach guided by four critical values: Belonging, generosity, mastery, and independence. These four principles are integral

to all the institution's developmental activities, including its curriculum. This high level of integration encourages holistic development of children and youth, allowing room for both emotional and intellectual development as illustrated in the following quote.

> "So, the four ways is belonging; with belonging, the core area that goes with that is mastery. So, in a school, in a workshop—how to engage with the world outside; getting a skill set and then, independence. The idea is to connect to a community outside and then generosity — you need to be able to give. So being able to share — giving of yourself. So, it's a care approach which is much more developmental than the very punitive and very disconnected way of working with kids. The idea is to work with kids. So, all these di*ff*erent things need to work together. So, your curriculum, your outreach, your intervention when things go wrong… It is very difficult to work in one way as a stand-alone. There's got to be a greater level of integration". (Mark, Centre Manager)



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Mark makes a few important points about implementing this curriculum. Firstly, its implementers need to be selfless, as inferred by the statement "You need to give of yourself". This selflessness includes giving time, effort, and energy even when it is, or appears to be, di*ffi*cult to do so. Secondly, the Circle of Courage uses a non-punitive approach to correct and address difficult behaviour and to connect with the child to bring emotional healing. Alternative discipline approaches are therefore used which will not be discussed in this article. In summary, all the activities and programmes at the CYCC reinforce these four values.

5.2. How Teachers Implement the 'Curriculum of Care'

There are a number of approaches teachers use to include children and youth at risk in the learning process. Some of these approaches, it can be argued, have more merit than others. The learning process is preceded by, and based upon, a positive relationship between the teacher and the learner to promote trust and cooperation during the teaching and learning process, especially necessary for children and youth at risk. Mark suggests that building rapport with children and youth at risk is a key aspect to gaining their trust and teaching them effectively as, in his view, this fosters cooperation and respect: "If there is not a relationship, your teaching role becomes very difficult" (Mark, Centre Manager).

In an education environment such as the CYCC, effective teaching cannot occur without an established attachment between the teacher and learner; otherwise, teaching children who experience emotional and behavioural barriers to learning is virtually impossible. Babedi[4] (p. 79) suggests that failure to address the needs of learners in the "physiological, moral, social and emotional domains" may aggravate emotional and behavioural problems. Other interventions may be necessary before these

learners are able to engage in learning. Teachers may not be able to address these needs fully, which is why a holistic approach is beneficial and other professionals outside of, or in addition to, the teaching staff, are helpful, an approach found to be effective by Attar-Swartz[5]. Teachers are likely to address their learners' affective needs by establishing themselves as caring teachers and by understanding their learners' learning needs better. In the excerpt below, a teacher insists on the importance of building trust in relationships with their learners, not only for the sake of teaching and learning, but for the emotional healing and personal development which children and youth at risk require:

> "As a teacher working here, I think I will describe my role more [than just] a teacher. A teacher is defined, from 8[am] till half past 3[pm]; my role is more than that because, if a learner now comes in and says he wants to talk, "Sir, I want to talk to you", then I will say Ok, let's go sit and talk… You see the approach in the role is different, where you must know now where does this learner come from; this learner comes from hardship. Hardship —h e never had a father. His father abandoned him when he was you know, or his father is in prison … And that makes me different than a teacher; that defines my role, completely different as a teacher". (Philip, Teacher)

This teacher reflects the relational approach taken by many teachers at the CYCC. Philip sees himself as more than just a teacher. He sees himself as a confidant, a friend, and a father figure who is willing and open to talk to the children whenever they need to talk. He tries to make them feel as comfortable as possible by making time available to speak with them. Much of the work of the teacher (and staff working collaboratively) entails

convincing the child that the teacher is trustworthy, and that the teacher genuinely wants to help, devoid of ulterior motives. Philip compares himself with mainstream teachers who go home at a certain time of the day: He goes beyond his duty by caring and helping children and youth wherever, and whenever, he can. This relationship is vital for teaching children and youth at risk.

Teaching methods or strategies can be described as those methods used to teach and to implement a curriculum or subject. Teachers at the CYCC do not subscribe to specific teaching methods or pedagogies, but use what they deem appropriate for their subject area and for the children and youths at the institution. This following section describes the findings of the teaching methods observed in three subject areas.

From observations of the Afrikaans and Tourism classes, I observed that the two children listen attentively to the teacher who talks during most of the lesson. She does revision at the end of her lesson to check if the children have understood the concepts correctly. Only one child responds, while the other remains quiet. The lesson is essentially teacher-centred, as the teacher's voice is heard during most of the lesson; there is little input from the two children. The children's voices are sometimes (although only to a limited extent) included in the learning process by means of one basic pedagogic method: Questions and answers. The teacher asks the children to repeat something after her and to read what is written on the board. The children listen attentively as the teacher poses questions throughout the lesson. The children's interest in the lesson is apparent with the comment, "This is a *kwaai* [cool] story".

The children are generally open to learning, and the effectiveness of learning seems to depend on the ability and attitude of the teacher. It is feasible that the teacher remains at the centre of the classes because of her awareness that the children feel shy and embarrassed, her awareness

of their knowledge gaps, and their lack of confidence to fully participate in her lessons. The teacher alleviates the pressure and discomfort the children may experience by speaking more and kindly asking questions she feels they are capable of answering easily, rather than challenging them. It was also apparent from my observations that the children enjoyed these lessons, but needed extensive time to process and understand the new knowledge acquired.

In the Mathematics classes, I observed how the teacher speaks to each child individually to ascertain what each does or does not understand. The teacher then calls two children to her desk where she guides them into a greater understanding of the lesson content. Each of the four children are at different stages in the textbook and work independently, at their individual pace. The teacher assists each one at his level. The teacher uses the board to explain how to round o*ff* numbers. One child commented, "Now that you must learn [sic] me how to do it. Now I understand!" [That is the way you should teach me how to do it. Now I (finally) understand!] This is a positive response from a child, from one who finds learning a new concept challenging. When the children are at the teacher's desk, they are eager and playful around her. They respect her and listen attentively to her explanations. While she is explaining the lesson to a child, she replies with slight impatience, "Don't think about the answer, but think about how you'll get to the answer". The child eventually finds a solution.

In one lesson, the bell rang indicating the end of the class, but the children decided to stay in her class and complete their work. This response showed an eagerness to learn. It is uplifting to observe children who have been stigmatised for their low academic achievement enjoying a Mathematics lesson. It seems that the learning atmosphere created by the teacher and the attitude of the teacher towards the children are motivating their interest and their learning. The teacher does not assume the children

cannot or are not willing to learn; instead, she gently guides them at their pace, helping them at every turn. She also does not lower her expectations of the children, but retains her belief in their ability to learn difficult concepts, despite moments of impatience with their apparent slowness.

The Mathematics teacher confessed during her interview that she does not know exactly what she is doing in the teaching context and does not use a specific pedagogy. She admits she teaches informally so that the children are comfortable speaking to her and asking questions. It seems that this approach has made her a successful teacher even though she doubts whether or not she is teaching 'correctly' as there is no standard, criterion, or guide to measure herself against in terms of teaching children with emotional and behavioural learning barriers. This teacher, who recently graduated, did not feel adequately prepared to teach inclusively and was uncertain she was doing the right thing. This is unfortunately a challenge with teacher training programmes that claim to provide 'inclusive education' training in South Africa, as reported by the British Council[29] (p. 69): Teachers who practise in special schools do not feel as prepared as those who teach in full-service schools. Furthermore, inclusive education teacher training programmes across the country's universities are disparate, the common teaching approach falls within a silo, and the content is often superficial[29] (pp. 52–55). These issues contextualise the Mathematics teacher's insecurities about her practice. Despite her feelings of inadequacy, she creatively and successfully re-engages her learners in learning Mathematics.

5.3. 'Curriculum of Care': Balancing Affective and Cognitive Development

Despite the 'Curriculum of Care' forming a learning environment for children and youth at risk to thrive, it does, however, face a few challenges.

The attempt at implementing a holistic curriculum means a fully-packed schedule at the expense of a deep learning experience. Half the school day is spent by learners in the academic department, and the other half is spent in the technical department. This is in addition to the therapeutic aspects of their care and extracurricular activities. This challenges the structured academic progress of these children and youth. Despite the good intentions of the institution to provide a holistic curriculum through the 'Curriculum of Care', the lack of capacity of the institution to expend intensive efforts on academic acceleration occasionally disadvantages children and youth, especially when leaving the institution. One teacher expresses her view that the 'Curriculum of Care' does not challenge some learners enough:

> "But here they don't really focus academically—the school as a whole … it's not really a main factor in their lives, where I feel it should be, despite their background or whatever, where they come from, their missing part of their lives—the reason why they are here. We assume because they come from [marginalised] communities—we assume their strength is not really [academic], but I feel some of them do extremely well. Some people just underestimate [them]. Like one person said that they [children and youth] couldn't cope there so we shouldn't put the pressure on them—here in this care school, we should be more lenient on them. But I think, it shouldn't be like that, because they can really work. Some of them want that challenge. I often speak to them on a personal level. One learner told me, is the institution preparing us for the world out there? Like here we care for them we want to baby them, we want to give them what they are not getting out there. But then [it] reality strikes [them], are you preparing us for the world out there? You're not letting us be strong. Because

> some of them want the challenge and some of them want to grow. I think we should teach them to grow, prepare them for the world out there, but at the same time care for them". (Cindy, Teacher)

This excerpt highlights the challenge of not adequately stressing the importance of academic progress and development alongside care. This teacher and others have expressed the view that the emphasis on care (such as building self-esteem and a sense of belonging) deprioritises education, but education is key to the integration of the youth into employment and long-term study opportunities. In fact, some contend that emphasis on care places learners at an even further disadvantage in the future. The potential for joining a mainstream school after disengagement is less likely if learners are not up to speed academically, inadequately prepared, or not on par with peers in mainstream schools. According to this view, the challenge is to carefully balance care and education. Cindy proposed that 'preparing' rather than 'caring' should be emphasised, although she saw both as necessary. Evidence shows that, "higher teacher expectations, more rigorous academic content and engaging pedagogy" benefit learners more than lower expectations and an emphasis on caring[30] (p. 23). Teacher expectations and engaging pedagogy have been linked to academic achievement[9,31,32]; thus, according to this research and to these arguments, a positive belief by teachers will help children overcome adversity. Tchombe[33] (pp. 126–129) builds on this argument and posits that social-affective factors will enhance learning, as these affect the process of learning. Thus, affective dimensions such as values, how teachers interact with learners, and how relationships complement the cognitive dimension of learning are valuable for inclusion and to improve learner achievement.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The article highlighted how an institution of care seeks to educationally include children and youth at risk in their teaching practices through an adapted curriculum called the 'Curriculum of Care'. This article provided an analysis of an adapted curriculum for children and youth at risk by describing its origins, its holistic operations, and the values encompassing the Circle of Courage. The article then described how teachers implement this curriculum by first establishing positive relationships with their learners, and secondly, by sensitivity to learner needs, and thirdly, by adapting their practices accordingly. This article suggests that in order to include children and youth at risk in education, institutions dedicated to the care and education of children and youth at risk must provide an appropriate curriculum, holistic and balanced in its approach, to prepare learners adequately for life after the institution. It also suggests that teachers as implementers need to acknowledge the affective dimension of the curriculum to best address learners' emotional and behavioural needs alongside the academic. This requires a positive relationship with the learner, which helps the learner form an attachment to the teacher, the subject area, and the process of learning. The implications of this approach are that teachers are caught in a tension of imbalance between care and academic achievement, or adequate preparation of youth for life, or further education, outside the institution. What these findings imply for practice is for teachers to make the time and e*ff*ort inside and outside of the classroom to develop a positive relationship with their learners, and to partake in training courses such as in the Circle of Courage, that could build up their confidence, and improve their knowledge and skills of working with children and youth at risk. The practical implications of these findings also suggest that practitioners and policymakers may need to rethink the CAPS

curriculum for learners with EBD, as the Circle of Courage is limited in its scope to support children and youth at risk in their academic development.

These findings concur with literature that emphasises the key role of teachers in determining how positive an educational experience is, feelings of inclusion, level of engagement with a subject area, the learning process, as well as learner achievement[16,17]. A teacher's approach and teaching methods should complement the implementation of an appropriate curriculum. This affective approach also supports literature that speaks to educational resilience[18,21]. This article provides insight into a unique institution in South Africa, its approach to curriculum adaption and implementation, and the shortcomings thereof.



This article shines a critical spotlight on how an adapted curriculum promotes the educational inclusion of children and youth at risk. It specifically argues that whilst such a 'Curriculum of Care' may promote the educational inclusion of children and youth at risk through its holistic approach, and address the EBD needs of children and youth at risk, it tends to ignore important aspects such as academic rigour and achievement. In critically examining the 'Curriculum of Care' used in the CYCC, this article highlights the tension of balancing care and education when educating children and youth at risk. A recommendation for further research is that this study could be followed up by a quantitative study that may complement the qualitative data in this or other similar studies.

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Adolescence as Symptom

Hans Skott-Myhre

Much of my scholarship and teaching over the past two decades or so has been founded in exploring the impacts of what has been called social constructions. Put simply, social constructions are descriptions of the world that are particular to a certain place and time. These descriptions generally arise out a necessity to reinforce power relations in a given society. Often, they have little objective justification and obtain their truth value through associations with common sense. That is, they are true because we believe in them, not because they can be supported with reference to actual material conditions. Such social constructions include race, class, gender, and sexuality, our common sense perception of which are at wild variance from their material actuality. Race, for example, has no actual existence biologically or genetically, but that doesn't mean it doesn't have significant social force.

One of my earliest interests in social construction originated in my investigations into adolescents. I was working with young people who had been identified as adolescents and I was deeply influenced by the psychological definitions of who these young people were and how I thought they would or could act. I expected to see rebellion, emotional upheaval, impulsive decision making, and so on. And what I saw seemed to confirm what I had been taught to expect. And then, I stumbled across

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Philip Aries and the idea that childhood was created as a social category, rather than a biological fact. From there, I found my way to the literature that traced the term adolescence, and my view of those young people I was encountering in my work began to shift.

In my reading, I found that adolescence was introduced as a social category in the first decade of the 20th century. When the psychologist Stanley Hall wrote the initial definitive text defining adolescence in 1904, he shifted the perception of what constituted childhood and what it was to be an adult. Up until then, young people 13-19 were considered adults. This was a time of taking on adult responsibilities, such as developing a trade or starting a family. To be married at 16 or17 and having children was not at all unusual or frowned upon. However, with emergence and expansion of industrial capitalism, this began to change. In the late 1800's there were changes in labor laws and a push for universal education that began to shift social perceptions of when adulthood began and how long childhood lasted.

The period of time from the late 1880's into the early 20th century was a time of profound social upheaval. The was a significant financial crisis in the late 1800's that has been compared to the great depression of the 1930's. For those who could find work, working conditions in factories and mines were dangerous and poorly paid. There were strikes and political upheaval by workers in the emergent industrial capitalist economies of Europe and the United States. Many were calling for communist and socialist forms of revolution to overthrow the capitalist ruling class. In short, it was a time of social distress and transition.

It is this context that G. Stanley Hall "discovered" adolescence and redefined the ways in which we envision human development to this day. In particular, Hall's assertion that adolescence was a period of developmental tumult marked by what he termed psychological "storm and stress" has been highly influential in how we see adolescence into the 21st century.

Certainly, one way to see this is that Hall used the new science of psychology to uncover what had always been a biological distinction that characterized the body between ages 13-19. Adolescence had always existed but needed the innovative research technologies of science to discover its existence. That is to say, adolescence is hard wired into the body as a developmental stage.

This continues to be the view of many developmentalist who continue the tradition of scientific inquiry into the nature of the adolescent body and brain. Recent work on the frontal lobe development of adolescents and studies of the neurological foundations of risk taking are current examples of this way of understanding adolescent behavior and motivation. The continued importance of the term developmental in the CYC literature and foundational theoretical writings are illustrative of how this way of thinking impacts our field in both theory and practice.

However, there may be another way to see this. The anthropologist Margaret Mead writing some scant 20 years after Hall, argued that adolescence is a cultural phenomenon related to the development of industrial capitalism in the United States. Far from being a universal phenomenon rife with what Hall called "storm and stress," Mead argued that pre-industrial societies do not have the characteristic period of psychological trauma we associate with adolescence. In her ethnography of young women in Samoa in the 1920's, she found no sign of generational fractures, sexual or social anxieties, depression, or rebellion. The young women in her study seemed well adjusted and integrated into their social milieu. For Mead, this meant that the storm and stress of adolescence was not biologically driven but was an artifact of life under the emergent social storm and stress of capitalist development. It wasn't so much that adolescents had the symptoms attributed to them by Hall. Instead, they

were manifesting the symptoms of a society that was producing a neurotic subject class that Hall had identified as adolescents.

We might elaborate Mead's contention by placing adolescence under the Marxist lens of base and superstructure. Of course, a full explication of this complex theoretical framework and its controversies would require several books to unpack. For our purposes here, however, we can gloss it in the following way. Marx asserted that in every historical period there was what he called a mode of production, This is the way we produce our lives as social beings. Put simply, it is what we do to provide for a certain standard and mode of living.

For example, in an agricultural society, the base is farming, in a hunter gatherer society, the base is hunting and gathering, in an industrial society, the base is factory-based production. All of the other activities in that society tend to center around supporting and extending the base. Marx called these related activities the superstructure which could include the government, courts, methods of education, family structures and so on. Marx argued that these social forms take different forms in different societies and historical periods under variations in the mode of production. In other words, society shifts and changes in response to changes in the mode of production.

For our purposes here, this also includes social roles and identities. While it was common under the feudal economic system in Europe in the middle ages to be and be known as a peasant, that social category and identity doesn't exist in the 21st century in the same way. Very few people have a primary identity as a peasant. This can be said of any number of social roles that are specific to a particular historical period and mode of production. When seen through this lens, Mead's assertion that adolescence emerges in response to industrial capitalism, is an indication that the role of the child under the agricultural mode of production of the

1800's in the U.S. was shifting as the mode of production was changing. Adolescence was an indication that a new society was emerging that required a new form of childhood and children.

This sounds kind of reasonable until we recognize that such transitions from one society into the next can be fraught with massive conflicts, both internal and external. In the same period of the late 1800's into the early 1900's, we have significant shifts in the role of women, people of color, LGBTQ+ people, workers, families and so on.

For those of us working with young people, what this could mean is that adolescence is not necessarily a hard biological fact, but could be a symptom of a society in flux. That the storm and strife of adolescence is not so much a symptom of the individual young person, but instead a symptom of the cracks and fissures of the society in which they live. They could be seen as what the systemic family therapists call the "identified patient."

The identified patient in family systems thinking is the person in the family who exhibits the symptoms of a break down or crisis in the family. Generally, such a crisis is unacknowledged or seemingly unresolvable and the identified patient begins to exhibit symptoms as a result. For systemic family therapists, it would be a mistake to treat the symptoms of the identified patient. The symptoms are not about the patient, they are manifestations of a systemic dysfunction in the family system in which they are embedded. I would suggest that we might benefit from beginning to see young people in a similar way. Perhaps their "symptoms" are less about them, and more about the dysfunctional social system in which they are embedded. Very possibly they are the symptom itself.

I was thinking of all of this because of an article I read recently in the *New York Times* which echoes rather clearly the set of ideas I am proposing here. Jamieson Webster in his article "Teenagers are Telling us Something

is Wrong with America" delineates how many of the young people he sees in his practice as a psychologist and psychoanalyst,

> *immediately want to exit the world stage, as if all options are already on the table, played-out, disenchanted, and the only choice is to disappear, or take medicine, get famous, detach — other versions of disappearing, suicide being the most extreme.*

He articulates in some detail the psychic stress the adolescents he sees are experiencing as they attempt to negotiate the emerging world of the 21st century. However, to put that crisis in context, I think we need to remember that our current time is also a moment in which we are shifting the mode of production, from industrial capitalism to cyber capitalism. If we take the thesis I have been proposing thus far seriously, then young people are manifesting the stresses and fractures of that change, much as they did at the turn of the last century. As Webster puts it,

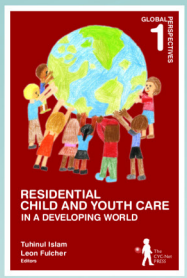
> *Article after article shows us that America's teenagers aren't doing well, without putting their finger on what is wrong beyond issues of individual "mental illness" and the usual bugbears trotted out — social media, video games, the weakening of the family unit. But what are the teenagers telling us is wrong? We seem to have forgotten that adolescents are lightning rods for the zeitgeist. They live at the fault lines of a culture, exposing our weak spots, showing the available array of solutions and insolubilities. They are holding up a mirror for us to see ourselves more clearly.*

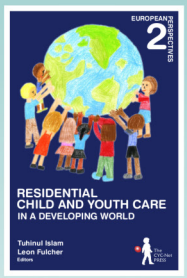
The question for me at this moment in history, is will we make the same mistake we made when we accepted Hall's developmental theses, while largely ignoring Mead's cautionary advice? Will we in CYC continue to see adolescents as individual sites of emotional dysregulation and psychic turmoil that require individual remediation , either relational or medical? Or will we take the opportunity to look into the mirror young people are offering us and work with them to navigate this transition between economies and ways of life? Will we see that their pain and suffering is a reflection of a social dysfunction that can only be remedied by changing those aspects of our emerging world that are so profoundly dysfunctional that they are literally killing us, psychically and physically? CYC is one of the few places where this work is perfectly situated to occur. However, we would have to abandon some of our developmental sacred cows. But the stakes are high enough that I think it might be worth it.

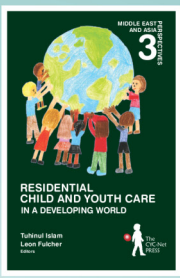
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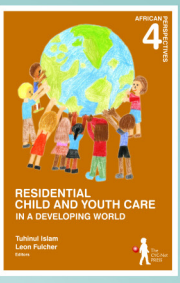






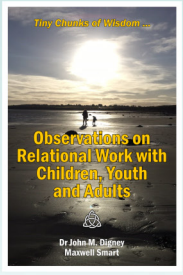


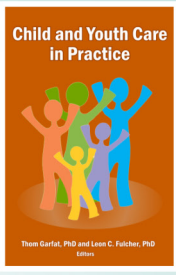


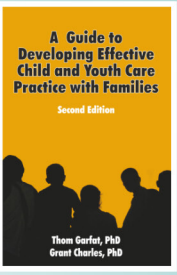


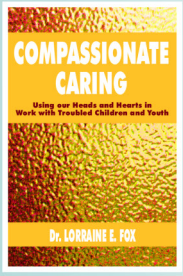


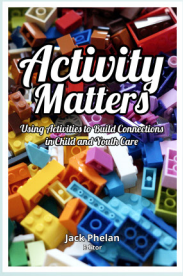






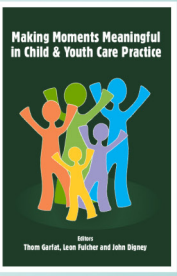


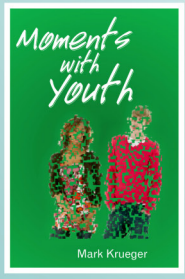


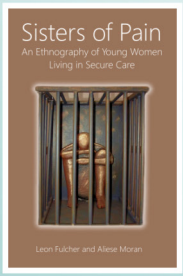


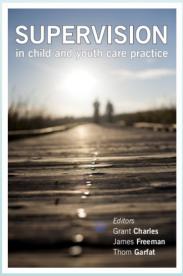


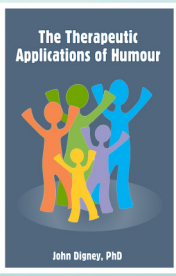


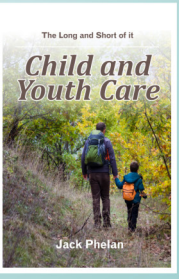










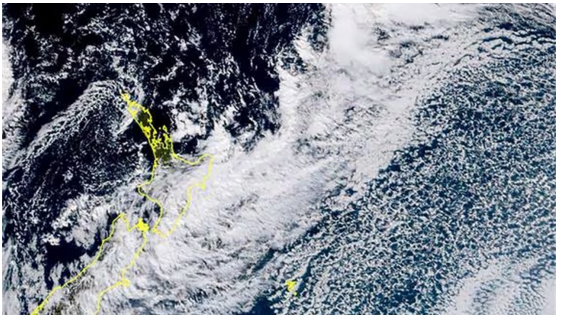


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Postcard from Leon Fulcher

Back Home in Tuai

Kia Ora Koutou Katoa and warm greetings child and youth care colleagues, wherever you are! I am quite shocked and surprised to find us now already past November in our calendars! Where has the year gone? Am I the only one to think that 2023 has just blown by!



New Zealand's Northeast has experienced a soggy year and more Spring rains

It has been good to get back home after some international trips earlier in the year. The garden needed our attention and we could resume volunteer duties as a St John's Health Shuttle driver for the weekly Tuai run into Wairoa, an hour's drive away. The mostly Māori community of Tuai use the Health Shuttle for weekly health visits and for supermarket or pharmacy shopping.

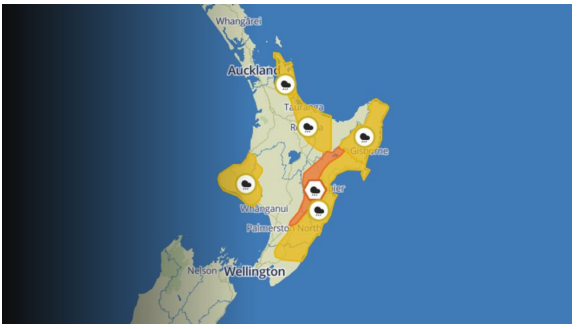
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Having overcome Cyclone Gabrielle in February and two further rain events, local farmers, and residents of the Tairawhiti(Tye-Raf-Iti) Region, Springtime has moved into Summer, dumping two further heavy rain events across the region. Everyone has had enough, more than enough!



Heavy rain warnings are currently in place for New Zealand's Northeast Coast



Newly planted crops have been destroyed by more days of rain and flooding

As predicted, more heavy rains meant that more forestry slash would be washed down creeks and waterways, blocking under bridges and then trashing through bridges only recently returned to limited use after repairs. For the fourth time in 10 months, the forestry slash piled up behind the Gladstone Bridge in Gisborne had to be cleared before the bridge could be compromised.

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Meanwhile, New Zealanders set out during the heavy Spring rains in October-November to vote and then follow the election of a change of Government from Labour to a National-led Coalition Government involving the New Zealand First Party and the ACT Party (Association of Consumers and Taxpayers) – first 3-party Coalition Government in New Zealand history.



New rain has meant more forestry slash has washed down the streams and rivers



Unless it is cleared quickly, the weight of floating slash compromises the bridge

The New Zealand National Party had campaigned on tax cuts to middle class and working people, funded through taxation of targeted New Zealand property sales to foreign buyers. However, since the National Party did not have enough seats to form a Government on their own, it was necessary to enter into negotiations between leaders of the National, ACT and New Zealand First parties. New Zealand First opposed any sale of New Zealand properties to foreign buyers thereby leaving a large tax hole in the new National Government's economic plans.

Before the 2023 New Zealand Government could be sworn in by the H.E. King Charles' Governor General Cindy Kiro, the matter of how to resolve the large tax hole in the new Government's Financial Plan had to be addressed. They will cancel legislation in progress to reduce access to cigarettes and tobacco, and to reduce the nicotine content of tobacco sold here.



November has seen the election of a new National-led Coalition Government



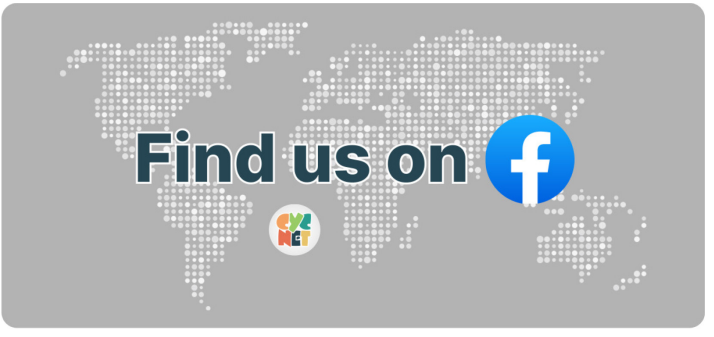
The King's Governor General formally appoints a new Coalition Government

We follow with interest as the new Luxton Government enters the corridors of political power, in a Parliament where 6 out of 7 Māori Parliamentary seats went to the new Pati Māori party. Mr Luxton is the former CEO of Air New Zealand so that may give him added skills around flying through the complicated demands of a three-party coalition. Winston Peters, founder of the New Zealand First party has served in earlier coalition governments, serving as Minister of Foreign Affairs and as Deputy Prime

Minister. He will thus serve as Deputy Prime Minister for 18 months before handing that role over to ACT party leader, David Seymour. Meanwhile, we follow with interest to see how the new government will manage reactions both New Zealand and international community reactions to New Zealand's new Tobacco policies.



Controversy abounds as the Luxton Government abandons Tobacco Legislation



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