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The Development of Possible Selves and Resilience in Youth Transitioning Out of Care

by

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Prof Adrian D. van Breda

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Abstract

This study contributes to the emerging body of South African literature on care leaving, as it explores the future selves and resilience factors of young people who are still in residential care and who are about to exit the statutory system. This is in contrast to the few other studies of care leaving in South Africa, which focus on the experiences of individuals after their discharge from care. This study also makes a contribution to the international discourse on care leaving, by adding a South African perspective on care leavers and their anticipated transition to adulthood.

For young people who are aging out of the care system, their exit from residential care coincides with leaving high school and transitioning into adulthood. This is a time of great excitement and optimism for young people of this age. Unfortunately for care leavers their journey into adulthood frequently does not fulfil its promise, as the outlook for care leavers is poor and their transition from care is largely unsupported. This is particularly true in the South African context; unemployment and NEET (not in employment, education or training) rates among youth are high, and family and community contexts are characterised by poverty, substance abuse, violence and crime. Compounding these factors is the absence of legislation mandating services for care leavers. Service provision for this vulnerable group of young people is minimal and fragmented.

Therefore, it may be argued that the time a young person spends in the care system should be aimed at maximising their life chances when they are discharged. In this regard, developing a young person’s resilience may be regarded as a critical element of service provision within the child and youth care centre. Future focus is regarded as a resilience factor, and this study argues that the development of the possible selves of young people while they are in care contributes to their resilience and may serve to improve the outcomes post discharge. The study argues too that developing resilience may also contribute to the emergence of possible selves in young people in care.

The views of a small group of young people, who were shortly to exit the statutory system, of their futures, the content of their possible selves and resilience factors were explored in this research. The social workers and child and youth care workers who worked with these young people also contributed to this study, identifying resilience factors, and the successes and challenges they have experienced when facilitating young peoples’ transition from care. Thus the voices of the principal role players, at a critical and pivotal moment in the care system journey are brought to the fore in this research.
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<td>Care leaver</td>
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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Young people (YP) at the age of 18 stand on the threshold of an exciting and challenging stage of life; their future stretches out before them, filled with possibilities, opportunities, and adventure. Many young people enjoy this life stage supported financially, educationally, and emotionally. While their transition to adulthood may not necessarily be smooth, they have the advantage and protection of support networks and resources. They are encouraged to explore their future selves and discover who they want to be, and the accomplishment of these future selves is facilitated in the context of helpful relationships and adequate resources. However, this picture is somewhat different for care leavers (CLs). In contrast to their non-cared for peers, CLs do not have the luxury of a gradual transition to adulthood. They are ‘catapulted’ into their futures, frequently with little preparation and having few, if any, helpful or reliable supportive relationships and in contexts that are inadequately resourced. It is perhaps not surprising that the outcomes for CLs are poor.

A child or YP is placed in a child and youth care centre (CYCC) when she is deemed to be in need of care and protection, and when such a placement is considered to be in the best interest of the child. Removing a child or YP from their family thus implies that placement in a CYCC serves to care and protect and improve their life chances. Unfortunately, the poor outcomes associated with being in care suggest otherwise, and the negative outcomes associated with care leaving indicate that placing children in statutory care is not serving its purpose.

It is within this framework that this study argues that developing the possible selves of young people in care (YPIC) contributes to their resilience, and has the potential to contribute to improved future outcomes. The CYCC environment, even in the South African context of resource constraints, may provide rich opportunities for YP to form healthy attachments, be exposed to positive role models, experience success, self-efficacy and other resilience-enhancing factors The CYCC also allows for the development of possible selves, either from the exposure to positive role models, or from experiencing success or taking part in extra activities, for example. Thus, resilience factors can impact on the development of possible selves; and possible selves themselves constitute a resilience process. Possible selves are powerful motivators of behaviour, directing the individual either towards a hoped for possible self, or away from a feared possible self. When the contents of a YP’s possible selves are identified and explored, they can be utilized to improve academic achievement or address behavioural challenges for example, therefore contributing to resilience and improved outcomes for CLs.
The views of social workers (SWs) and child and youth care workers (CYCWs) concerning the futures of the YPIC are included in this study, as they assume the primary care giving role for YPIC, and are in a position to contribute to the development of resilience and possible selves of YPIC.

1.2. Context and background of the study

Internationally, children are recognised as a vulnerable population in need of special legislation specifically aimed at protecting their rights and advocating for their best interests. The United Nations (UN) Declaration on Social and Legal Principles Relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children (United Nations, 1986) comments that states should assign high priority to family and child welfare, as child welfare is dependent on good family welfare. The family unit is regarded as the ideal environment for children, and therefore it is a priority for children to be cared for by their parents. However, the Declaration recognizes that this is not always possible, and states that when placing children in alternative care, their need for affection and the right to security and continuity of care are overriding considerations (United Nations, 1986).

South African legislation also recognizes that children are a distinct group in society with specific requirements. Children are regarded as among the most vulnerable groups in society and consequently in need of special protection. It is understood that children are dependent on their parents or families, and that the state has a responsibility to provide care and protection when parents or families fail (RSA, 1996b, section 28). The Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996b) also states that the best interest of the child standard is paramount in every matter concerning the child. The White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997, section 167) recognizes that a secure family life is a basic need of all children, and outlines a comprehensive package of intervention strategies and proposed programmes aimed at building and sustaining family life. However, the White Paper (RSA, 1997) also recognizes that preservation of family life is not always possible, and outlines provisions for alternative care.

It is against this backdrop of international and national legislation that the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2005) and the Children’s Amendment Act 41 of 2007 (RSA, 2007) have been developed. These Acts assert that the best interest of the child standard must be applied in all decisions pertaining to children. They further uphold the right of a child to remain within their biological family unit as a first priority, and emphasis is placed on prevention and intervention services. This emphasis is also seen in other South African policy documents (RSA, 2013, n.d). However, it is recognized that it is not always possible or advisable to keep children in the family, and children are placed in care when a removal from home circumstances is determined to be in the best interest of the child (RSA, 2005).
Research into the number of children in South African children’s homes is scant and accurate figures difficult to establish as a result. However, the Situational Analysis of Children in South Africa (RSA, 2009) report, while acknowledging that children’s homes are poorly researched, offers the following figures. In 2003 there were 204 registered children’s homes countrywide. In 2005, 10,361 children were placed in 181 registered children’s homes throughout South Africa. The figures cited for 2007 reflect 193 registered children’s homes, half of which were located in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, and five state-run children’s homes, which can accommodate a total of 12,920 children. More recent information states that between 2009 and 2010 13,250 children and YP were placed in CYCCs (RSA, 2012).

The Children’s Amendment Act (RSA, 2007) allows for the provision of a comprehensive package of services for children placed in care. However, these services are divided into those that must be provided and those that may be provided. Compulsory services can be regarded as core, or basic level services. Optional services include those that address social functioning issues and preparation for the transition from care. This is unfortunate, as children in care frequently suffer from multiple behavioural, cognitive and social challenges resulting from exposure to abuse, neglect or malnutrition prior to their admission to a CYCC (Dickens, 2016; Purvis, Cross, Dansereau, & Parris, 2013; RSA, 2012). In the absence of mandated services to address social functioning and preparation from care, it is left to the CYCC to provide such services as they are able. Unfortunately, welfare services in South Africa are vastly under resourced, and this impacts on service provision (Mosoma & Spies, 2016; Strydom, 2014b). When organizations are struggling to provide basic necessities, programmes to address social functioning and facilitate the transition from care may well fall into the category of ‘nice to have’.

This is concerning as the majority of the literature maintains that residential care is associated with negative outcomes across a number of spheres and in terms of long term functioning (del Valle, Lázaro-Visa, López, & Bravo, 2011; Zetlin, Weinberg, & Shea, 2010). The transition to adulthood is regarded as one of the most challenging and least successful aspects of residential care, and it is suggested that individuals who grow up in the statutory system continue to use welfare services lifelong (Gharabagi & Groskleg, 2010; Malia, Dowty, & Danjczek, 2008). The apparent contradiction between placing children in residential care to better their life chances and the negative outcomes as discussed in literature, forms the platform for this study’s problem statement. It would seem that placement in residential care is, for the most part, not having the anticipated effect of improving the functioning and life chances of the significant number of children so placed. This suggests that some vital link is not being made if transition from care remains a challenging and unsuccessful aspect of statutory placements.
Emerging adulthood is the developmental phase between the ages of 18 and 24 and is a hopeful, exciting time, filled with possibilities and opportunities (Arnett, 2000). Young people in this life stage set out to discover who they are in the world, and make their way into adulthood. For most young people in this life stage, this journey is undertaken within a family context, ensuring they have the freedom to explore and construct themselves as emerging adults with a safety and support network underpinning their passage. For many, the transition is gradual, and emerging adults know they can depend on their families for financial, practical and emotional support, and for a place to stay if necessary (Arnett, 2007).

However, for CLs their journey into adulthood is often abrupt, pressured and undertaken with little or no support from either family or the statutory system (Pinkerton & Rooney, 2014; Stein, 2012; Sulimani-Aidan, 2015). They are expected to move from a position of supported living at the CYCC, to coping in often harsh environments overnight. Unlike their non-cared for peers, they do not have the luxury of several years to explore and discover who they are in the world; they are expected to ‘hit the ground running’ immediately they exit the statutory system (Höjer & Sjöblom, 2009; Rogers, 2011). They face the world with few resources to draw on and low levels of education, and many return to unchanged home situations (Cashmore & Paxman, 2006; Rogers, 2011; Tanur, 2012). In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the outcomes for CLs are poor, and they remain a vulnerable and disadvantaged section of the population (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006).

If services are not provided to CLs as they exit the care system and transition into adulthood, one can argue that their time while in care should be maximized, in order to give them the best possible chance when they leave the CYCC. In this respect, building resilience and inculcating a strong future focus may help to create a positive sense of self for YPIC, and serve as protective factors when they leave the CYCC.

The self is not constructed in a vacuum; it develops from a person’s life experiences, past and current, and exerts influence on one’s behaviour (Henderson & Thompson, 2014). Possible selves are fashioned in an environment that provides opportunities to experience other ways of being and doing (van Breda, 2010; Vignoles, Manzi, Regalia, Jemmolo, & Scabini, 2008), and a strong sense of possible self is a powerful motivating factor on behaviour (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Vignoles et al., 2008). Hoped for selves may be developed through exposure to other people who act as role models or mentors, and to environments such as work shadowing, host families and extracurricular activities at school. These positive opportunities may also provide a balance to the feared possible self. Such exposures are recognised as facilitators and ecologies of resilience (Freundlich & Avery, 2006; Stein, 2008; Ungar, 2012). A positive future focus helps YPIC develop a positive identity, which is a
resilience factor (Sulimani-Aidan, 2016a). Resilience is understood as a key factor in overcoming the challenges YPIC experience, both historically and as they transition out of the statutory system. Thus the argument can be made that possible selves and ecologies of resilience work in a complementary fashion; possible selves may be developed through interventions that promote resilience, and resilience can be developed and enhanced by a well-established sense of possible self. It is my argument that the complementarity of these theories can be utilized to better the life chances of YPIC.

1.3. **Aim and objectives**

In light of the above, the aim of this study was to explore the development of possible selves and resilience in young people transitioning out of care.

In order to meet this aim, the objectives of this study were as follows:

1. Provide YPIC a platform to describe and discuss their views of their futures (i.e. their possible selves) and identify resilience factors.
2. Establish how social workers (SWs) and child and youth care workers (CYCWs) view the futures of the young people in their care.
3. Establish what interventions or services, aimed at facilitating transition from care, are offered and the evaluation by YPIC of these services.
4. Establish what challenges and successes SWs and CYCWs have experienced in facilitating young people’s transition from care.
5. Make recommendations for further research, policy and social work and child and youth care work training and practice based on the findings of this study.

1.4. **Research methodology**

The study made use of a qualitative approach and phenomenological design. Purposive sampling was used and data was collected using creative activities in conjunction with semi-structured interviews and mini-focus groups.

A qualitative approach was used in this study. Yates (2004) suggests that the goal of qualitative research is to give a detailed account of a particular circumstance or situation. Qualitative research is considered particularly suited to social work research, as it connects with the fundamental social work values of the dignity and worth of the individual and the delivery of quality and competent service (Gilgun & Abrams, 2002). Social workers typically work with disadvantaged or at risk individuals and communities. Using a qualitative design in this study aimed to bring to the fore the lived experiences of the participants, and bring their voices to an arena in which decisions are often made.
about them instead of with them (Gilgun & Abrams, 2002). The field of transition from care is an emerging area of study, and so this research was exploratory in nature as it explored an under-researched field (Durrheim, 2006). A phenomenological design was chosen for this study, as phenomenology seeks to understand the lived experiences of its participants, which is in keeping with the objectives of the research (Creswell, 2007).

Four CYCCs were purposively sampled from the population of CYCCs in the Port Elizabeth area. There are approximately seven residential care facilities in the Port Elizabeth area. Two of these are places of safety, which provide short term placements for ‘difficult to place’ children, young people awaiting trial, or young people awaiting transfer to a school of industry. As this study proposed to recruit participants who had been in statutory care for a period of not less than 24 months, place of safety CYCCs were not suitable sites for recruitment. In terms of chapter 13, Section 191 of the Children’s Amendment Act (RSA, 2007), a CYCC is defined as a facility that provides residential care. Criteria for sampling included the provision of residential care for more than six children outside the family environment, and the provision of therapeutic services, but the facility was not a partial care facility, drop in centre, boarding school, or school hostel, (RSA, 2007, section 191). The directors of the facilities were initially approached in writing. This was followed up telephonically, to secure organisational consent to participate before recruiting participants.

Within each CYCC, three distinct populations were identified and purposively sampled. A preliminary meeting with interested parties from the three populations was scheduled and information packs were provided to those present.

A YPIC is a child who has been committed to a CYCC by order of a Children’s Court in terms of Section 155 of the Children’s Act (RSA, 2005). Three YPIC were purposively sampled from each CYCC, making a total of 12 participants. The purposive sampling criteria for this population comprised of two components. First that participants should be between the ages of 17 and 18. The reason for using this age group is that these young people stand on the dual brinks of adulthood and exiting the statutory system. Adolescence is a time of great hope and possibilities, when young people ‘try on’ different identities. One aspect of this phase of life is exploring options about future identities in terms of careers and life style. Second, participants should have been in residential care for a period of not less than 24 months. Two years was considered to be an adequate time for participants to have adjusted to life in a CYCC, and to have been exposed to group programmes, links with social capital and discussions about career planning and exit strategies. Thus participants would be in a position to comment about the service provision they had received and their felt level of preparedness for exiting the system.
The second population consisted of SWs employed by the CYCC, holding a four year professional qualification in either social work or child and youth care work, and who were registered as such with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). Four participants, one from each site, were recruited from this population. Criteria for inclusion in the study were that the participants should have a minimum of five years’ experience in the field of child and youth care work, and have been employed at the CYCC for a minimum of two years.

This third population was made up of CYCWs who were employed by the CYCC, who had the required certificate qualification as a CYCW, and who were registered with the SACSSP as a CYCW. A total sample of nine participants were recruited from the research sites. Criteria for inclusion in the study in terms of length of experience and employment at the CYCC were the same as for the previous sample. Data was collected from the different populations in different ways. Two individual interviews were conducted with the YP, employing creative activities to facilitate discussion that was informed by a semi-structured interview schedule to ensure the same basic line of enquiry was followed across interviews. The first interview used a life-map (Du Plessis, 2005) to explore the participants’ future focus, and the second utilized the possible-me tree (Carey & Martin, 2007) to explore their possible selves. Creative activities create opportunity for building rapport and trust, which are critical factors in obtaining sound data from an adolescent population (Nolas, 2011). Further, creative activities generate concrete visual ‘maps’ of what are usually vague ideas. The process of producing a visual representation allows for ideas to coalesce and become more defined (Gawler, 2002; Shaw, Brady, & Davey, 2011). The third and final interview with the YP comprised a mini focus group with all participating YPIC. The mini-focus group discussion concentrated on the preparation and transition interventions the YPIC had experienced, and their evaluation of these.

Data from the samples of SWs and CYCWs was gathered via mini-focus groups, following a question guide to ensure that the objectives of the study were met (Kelly, 2006; Llamputtong, 2011). One mini-focus group for the SWs was held, and a focus group was held with the CYCWs. The mini-focus groups explored the themes of how SWs and CYCWs regard the futures of CLs, what interventions aimed at preparing YP to leave the CYCC and post-discharge services were available to YP, SWs and CYCWs understanding of resilience, and their challenges and successes in respect of facilitating YPs exit from the CYCC.

The interviews were recorded and the recordings were transcribed and verified. The transcription and verification of the recordings allowed the candidate to explore and become familiar with the content. The transcripts were then analysed manually line by line, using a thematic approach, allowing patterns and categories to emerge from the data. These patterns and categories were checked by an experienced
researcher to ensure that they were emerging from the data and not a result of researcher bias. Over time these patterns became more coherent and were organised into sub-codes, and eventually integrated into more inclusive codes (Ezzy, 2002; Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002; Nicholls, 2009). Ezzy (2002) describes this as an open coding system. Thematic analysis allows for an inductive analysis of the data, allowing the voices of the participants to emerge (Ezzy, 2002).

Trustworthiness refers to the ability of the research to produce results that are credible and dependable. Several strategies identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were employed in this study to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. Prolonged engagement with participants contributes to the confirmability and credibility of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). A form of prolonged engagement was used in this study. The candidate visited the CYCCs on several occasions as part of the recruitment process, and spent considerable amounts of time at the various CYCCs during the data collection phase. Triangulation of sites, sources and methods of data collection were also employed, contributing to confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). An “audit trail” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 319) was kept as a method of ensuring the dependability of the study (Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Kelly, 2006), extracts of which are appended to the thesis.

Reflexivity is recognised as contributing to the rigour of a study (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Reflexivity is a process of critical reflection that requires researchers to ask of themselves, ‘What do I know and how do I know it?’ (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). This self-aware meta-analysis occurs at all stages of the research process, from understanding personal reasons for choosing the topic of study, to a critical examination of the data collection and analysis techniques (Finlay, 2002; Watt, 2007). Watt (2007) states that the researcher should be aware of her biases, feelings and thoughts, and how these may be influencing the research. Similarly, Mauthner and Doucet (2003) argue that the researcher cannot be separate from the study, and emphasise the interconnectedness of the researcher, methodology, participants and context. A reflexivity statement is provided in chapter three.

1.5. Ethical considerations

The proposal was submitted to the University of Johannesburg Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics committee for approval. Directors of the CYCC were asked to provide written consent to conduct the study at their institutions. Consent to participate in the study was secured from SWs and CYCWs. Passive consent was obtained from parents of YPIC to interview the YP who were under the age of 18. Written consent to participate in the study was secured from YPIC immediately before the first interview. The consent form was reviewed with the YP on each subsequent occasion that the YP were interviewed by the candidate.
The well-being of the research participants is of paramount importance when conducting social science studies. This is particularly significant when working with individuals who have experienced trauma. Young people in care have, by definition, experienced trauma in some form and to some degree, so the responsibility of the researcher is to ensure that they are not re-traumatized by participating in the research (Boothroyd, Stiles, & Best, 2009).

Four guiding principles of ethical research identified in McLaughlin (2007) and Wassenaar (2006) were employed to ensure that participants’ confidentiality was ensured, their right to dignity and respect protected, their right to autonomy respected, and that they experienced no harm or distress as a result of taking part in the study.

Several strategies were employed to ensure confidentiality. Once the interviews had been transcribed, all identifying information was removed from the transcripts and participants were assigned a pseudonym and a code. In addition, safe data storage methods were used, for example transcripts were stored in a secure location and all work stored on computer was password protected.

At all times the participants were treated with respect, and participants were fully informed of the nature and purpose of the research and of the techniques that were employed in the data collection process, including the focus group. Participants were informed that they were entitled to a summary of the findings and access to the full thesis if they so wished.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. The participants were informed that they had the right not to participate, not to answer questions that may have caused them distress or discomfort, and to withdraw from the interview process at any time. This is an important ethical concern when working with young people, as power differentials exist between children and adults, including the researcher (Shaw et al., 2011).

The sample of young people in this study were on the brink of exiting the statutory system. While this may have been perceived, on the surface, an exciting time full of possibilities, it may also have been a time of anxiety and stress. The proposed data collection techniques were intended to be positive in their application, but had the potential to cause or heighten anxiety or uncertainty in those leaving care. Participant responses were monitored carefully, and counsellors at each site were identified prior to the interviews in case referrals were necessary.
1.6. Definitions of terms

1.6.1. Resilience

Resilience is the ability to recover, and show positive adaptation in the face of significant risk or adversity (Wright, Masten, & Narayan, 2013). Resilience is a construct made up of three components: exposure to or experience of adversity or risk, resilience or protective factors and better than expected outcomes (Luthar, 2006). Resilience emerges when risk factors are balanced by protective factors. Risk and protective factors may be found within and across all domains of the social ecology and may be single, multiple, chronic or cumulative in nature (Meinck, Cluver, Boyes, & Ndhlovu, 2015).

1.6.2. Possible selves

Possible selves are the future selves people think about and hope to become, or fear becoming (Markus & Nurius, 1986). People think a great deal about themselves in the future. Possible selves are the conjectural pictures of the future that include the best self a person would like to become, the hoped for possible self, and the self that one fears becoming (Strahan & Wilson, 2006). Well-adjusted individuals envision a wide range of possible selves and are more likely to validate positive possible selves (Strahan & Wilson, 2006). Future selves exert a powerful influence on the current self, on motivation and behaviour, and have been shown to be useful constructs over a range of life challenges (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006; Tse, Yuen, & Suto, 2014). Future focus is regarded as a resilience factor, as it linked to better outcomes and adjustment (Sulimani-Aidan, 2016a).

1.6.3. Alternative care

A child is placed in alternative care when he/she is found to be in need of care and protection in terms of section 150 of the Children’s Act, 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2005), removed from his/her family and placed in foster care, a CYCC or temporary safe care (RSA, 2007, section 167). Such placements are made to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child concerned.

1.6.4. Child and youth care centre (CYCC)

According to the Children’s Amendment Act, 41 of 2007 (RSA, 2007), a CYCC provides residential care to more than six children outside their home environment. A CYCC must offer a residential programme suited to the needs of the children placed there. Residential programmes are designed for the reception and development of children who are not in a family placement. Other programmes that may be provided by the CYCC include substance abuse interventions, therapeutic and developmental programmes and transition from care programmes.
The definition of a CYCC used in this study does not include partial care facilities, drop-in centres, boarding schools, school hostels, establishments that provide education and training to children and young people or prisons (RSA, 2007).

1.6.5. **Young people in care (YPIC)**

In South Africa a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (RSA, 2005). However the legal position of a ‘child’ is clouded by the fact that children from the age of 12 have certain ‘adult’ rights. For example, a child can independently access contraceptives, consent to a termination of pregnancy and make decisions about the disclosure of her HIV status. The definition of a YP is someone between the ages of 14 and 17 (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). A YPIC is between the ages of 14 and 17 who has been placed in alternative care in terms of section 150 of the Children’s Act, 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2005). For the purposes of this study, ‘in care’ refers to a YP who has been placed in a CYCC, as defined above.

1.6.6. **Leaving care and care leavers (CLs)**

Leaving care refers to exiting the care system either because the individual has reached the age of majority (18 years in South Africa) and the care system no longer has a legal responsibility to the person, or because the YP chooses to exit the system. Placement breakdown is another reason for leaving care. In South Africa, provision is made for YP to remain in care until the age of 21 in order to complete their education (RSA, 2007).

Care leavers, for the purpose of this study, were individuals who were between 17 and 18 years of age, and who would age out of the care system at the end of the 2015 academic year.

1.6.7. **Social worker (SW)**

A SW is an individual who holds both a three year Bachelor’s degree and an Honour’s degree in Social Work, or a four year Bachelor of Social Work degree, and is registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) as a SW.

1.6.8. **Child and youth care worker (CYCW)**

A CYCW is an individual who holds either a one year Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC) certificate at the National Qualification Framework (NQF) level three, or a two year FETC diploma at NQF level four in child and youth care work, and is registered as a CYCW with the SACSSP.
1.7. **Structure of the study**

The treatise is comprised of five chapters. Chapter one introduces the study, providing the context and background of the research, followed by the aim and objectives that informed the research. An overview of the research methodology is provided in this chapter, beginning with the research approach and design, and then moving on to discuss population, sampling and recruitment, data collection and data analysis. The chapter includes sections that address trustworthiness and ethical considerations, followed by an outline of the ethical considerations and definitions of the terms used throughout the thesis. The chapter concludes with an overview of the structure of the study.

Chapter two provides a comprehensive discussion of the literature relevant to this study. Although the life stage of adolescence was not the principal focus of this research, the main participants were young people in the specific context of child and care centres. Therefore the literature review opens with a discussion of various aspects of adolescence. One of the objectives of this research was to explore care leaving preparation, and thus the literature that discusses transitions from care, in terms of pathways, preparation, outcomes and Independent Living Programmes (ILP), is presented. This is followed by a critical discussion of the development of the care leaving debate in the international and South African arenas. The final sections of the chapter present the literature concerning the theoretical frameworks that were used in this study: resilience and possible selves theory.

Chapter three presents a detailed account of the methodology used in the design and implementation of this research. Opening with a discussion of the research approach and design, the chapter moves on to detail the theoretical frameworks that informed this study. The populations identified for the study and the sampling and recruitment strategies that were implemented to access participants are then presented. The data collection and analysis methods are also discussed in detail, and the strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the study are presented. The chapter concludes with a thorough discussion of the ethical concerns attendant to this research and the measures taken to ensure that ethical standards were upheld.

Chapter four is the heart of this thesis. It is a descriptive chapter presenting the findings of the study, using the participants’ own words to show how the research objectives were met. This chapter is structured according to the order of the objectives of the study, as found in section 1.3. The findings are discussed in the context of relevant literature and the theoretical frameworks of resilience and possible selves.

Chapter five is the final chapter and brings together a discussion of the integration of the aim and objectives and the limitations of this research. The original contribution of this work is presented and
the chapter concludes with a discussion of recommendations for future research, policy and social work and child and youth care practice.

1.8. Conclusion

Chapter one has presented an introduction to this thesis followed by the context and background to the study. This was followed by the aims and objectives and an overview of the research methodology which included the populations and sampling, data collection and analysis and measures to ensure trustworthiness. A discussion of the ethical considerations was followed by definitions of the terms used in this thesis. The chapter concluded with an overview of the structure of the study. Chapter two follows and provides a comprehensive discussion of the literature relevant to this study.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Chapter two presents a review of the literature pertinent to this study. As the focus of the study is YP who are on the verge of exiting the statutory care system, the chapter opens with a discussion of various aspect of adolescence: the concept of adolescence, adolescence in cultural contexts and adolescence in an African and South African context and politics and adolescence. Still within the theme of adolescence, identity development in adolescence and for YPIC is discussed, followed by sections that examine how the brain develops in adolescence and the effects of Complex Developmental Trauma. This section of the chapter concludes with a discussion of the theory of Emerging Adulthood. Another aspect of this study is YPs’ transition from care, so the next section of the chapter examines CLs pathways out of care and their preparation for discharge and exiting the statutory system. This is followed by a discussion of the educational, employment and housing outcomes for CLs, as well as the emergence and implementation of Independent Living Programmes. As the care system and its programmes are governed by policy and legislation, the next section of the chapter traces the development of such and offers a comparison of the South African and international care leaving mandates. This research is guided by two theoretical lenses: resilience theory and possible selves theory. The evolution and development of resilience theory is presented, followed by a discussion of the key concepts of resilience theory. Resilience across the lifespan is also discussed, followed by a critique of resilience theory. This section of the chapter concludes with an overview of Social Ecological Theory which is a recent development in the field of resilience research and theory. The Circle of Courage, is the model used in the South African statutory system to promote resilience among children in care. Therefore, this model is presented and linked to the resilience theory constructs that impact on the outcomes for CLs. Finally, the chapter examines possible selves theory, presenting an overview of the theory, before moving on to discuss key theoretical aspects: possible selves as incentives, possible selves as a context for the current self, consequences of the theory for self-concept theory and the development of the original possible selves conceptualization. This is followed by a critique of the theory and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the various fields in which possible selves theory has been applied.

2.2. Adolescence

Although adolescence as a life stage is not the main focus of this study, adolescents in the specific context of a CYCC setting are the primary participants in this research. Further, the YP that are the focus of this study are on the brink of adulthood, about to transition out of care and from adolescence
into young adulthood. Thus it is necessary to consider adolescence as a life stage, its developmental tasks, challenges, different contexts and constructions of adolescents and cultural relevance in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of young people in relation to the purpose of this study, which is to establish the preparedness and resilience of young people who are about to exit the care system. Currently, the developmental stage of adolescence receives a great deal of scholarly attention, and a substantial body of literature exists that examines adolescence across many domains. This literature review will critically discuss the concept of adolescence as a Western construct and will examine literature that speaks of adolescence in different cultures. There will be a focus on the development of identity, and the development of the adolescent brain. These aspects of adolescent development will be linked to the concept of emerging adulthood.

2.2.1. The concept of adolescence

Adolescence is defined as the phase between childhood and adulthood, and occurs in the time from the onset of puberty to the age of 18 (Crone & Dahl, 2012). The literature concerning the evolution of adolescence as a distinct life stage is somewhat contradictory. On the one hand there is a body of evidence which maintains that adolescence has been widely recognized, across cultures and throughout time, as a specific life stage between childhood and adulthood, which has been accorded rites and rituals to mark its onset and conclusion (Delaney, 1995; Markstrom, Berman, Sabino, & Turner, 1998; Peterson, 2011; Scott, 1998). Further to this, Crone and Dahl (2012) argue that the historical existence of adolescence as a developmental stage is not in question; rather, it is the timing and duration of adolescence that has changed over time. On the other hand, there is a school of thought which argues that ‘adolescence’, as a transition between childhood and adulthood, is a recent construct of Western society that is not relevant or applicable across all societies and cultures, a point of discussion that will be explored more fully later in this review (Baxter, 2009; Bradford-Brown & Larson, 2004; Gravett, 2009).

Assuming that the life stage of ‘adolescence’ is widely accepted, there are a number of factors that influence the concept of adolescence. The classification of the category of adolescence, and the experience of adolescents is shaped and determined by historical, social and economic factors (Bucholtz, 2002). For example contexts of war or peace, famine or plenty or political/economic stability or turmoil are historic factors that influence the experience and life stage of adolescence (Bucholtz, 2002; Seekings, 2006; Stetsenko, 2004). Population shifts, such as an increase or decrease in the number of young people, the dependency ratio, and economic circumstances that help or hinder young people from assuming status as wage earners, all contribute to how adolescence is informed and experienced (Bucholtz, 2002; Davies, 2009). Population size and density contribute to problems relevant to young peoples’ lives such as overcrowding, unemployment and labour shortages (Booth,
Fussell and Greene (2004) maintain that changes in fertility and mortality rates have resulted in people under the age of 15 years making up one third of the population in late initiation countries, of which South Africa is one (Fussell & Greene, 2004). More recent South African figures from National Youth Development Agency (2011a) state that the youth population is 41% of the total population, and that the 14 to 35 year old age group is growing at a higher rate than the general population. This demographic trend is placing pressure on schools, the labour market and services, illustrating the point that demographic conditions help or hinder government and family investment in young people (Fussell & Greene, 2004; National Youth Development Agency, 2011a).

Although the study of adolescence has generated a large body of academic and popular literature, most of it focusses on adolescence in terms of negative behaviours associated with negative outcomes for the individual, the family and larger society (Baxter, 2009). In her bibliographic review of literature concerning adolescents, Gravett (2009) documents headings such as crime, violence and gangs, teenage pregnancy and sexuality, and lists an impressive array of journal articles and scholarly books around these topics. Bucholtz (2002) observes that that adolescence has been widely studied predominantly in terms of two topics, violence and sexuality, and that these subjects have been problematized and sensationalized in the literature. This presentation of adolescence and adolescent behaviour as social problems perhaps has more popular appeal, but according to Bucholtz (2002) and Baxter (2009) is approached from adult-centred perspectives and driven by middle class concerns and agendas. Baxter (2009) asserts that the negative portrayal of adolescent behaviour is a misrepresentation, and maintains that contrary to this general understanding, adolescents are behaving well amid severe stress.

2.2.2. Adolescence in cultural contexts

Schegel (as cited in Bradford-Brown & Larson, 2004, p. 1) speaks of a “global youth culture” in which young people from across the globe are brought together through the internet and social media, use similar slang expressions, listen to similar music and share similar looks in terms of fashion and hair-style. Various terms have been coined to capture this generation of young people: “digital natives”, “net generation” and “millennium generation” are just a few (Mesch, 2009, p. 50). However, Bradford-Brown and Larson (2004) maintain that while this may be true of predominantly Western, middle class adolescents, the impression that young people the world over share common interests, challenges and concerns is superficial, and assert that there are “markedly different ‘adolescences’” around the world (Bradford-Brown & Larson, 2004, p. 2). Nsamenang (2004, p. 61) refers to the common understanding of adolescence as a “Eurocentric enterprise” and contends that Western social scientists have shown remarkable ethnocentrism in their study of adolescence, without the motivation or opportunity to consider its implications. Bradford-Brown and Larson (2004) and Nsamenang
(2004) share the view that the American model of adolescence dominates accounts of what should or should not happen during the stage of adolescence development. This casting of adolescence in a Western mould fails to capture adolescence in a global context, and Nsamenang (2004) asserts that the field of adolescence would have had an entirely different slant if adolescence had been ‘discovered’ within a context other than European and North American.

Adolescence is not a highly salient feature in all cultures. Stevenson and Zusho (2004) note that in China adolescence was not considered a defined period of development until recently; there was childhood and then there was adulthood. Similarly, Booth (2004) comments that in Arab countries adolescence was not traditionally recognized as a distinct life stage. The identification of ‘youth’ or ‘adolescent’ may be based on social circumstances rather than chronological age (Bucholtz, 2002). Categories such as adolescent, teen, young adult are associated with specific ages, however, ‘youth’ in a cultural context, frequently marks the beginning of long-term, perhaps lifelong, engagement in particular cultural practices (Bucholtz, 2002).

In societies where recognition of adolescence as a life stage is emerging, it is usually in response to rapid economic and cultural shifts, and brings with it its own challenges (Bucholtz, 2002). Young people in such contexts face stresses not experienced by their contemporaries in industrialized societies as they attempt to balance the tension between tradition and innovation, and high rates of suicide among young people in some societies have been attributed to cultural changes that dislocate traditional social roles and socialization processes (Booth, 2004; Bucholtz, 2002; Santa-Maria, 2004). In addition, adolescence, as characterised as a time of carefree indulgence, exploration and self-determination, is not relevant in all societies. Many young people in late industrialized societies move rapidly into adult roles due to social, political or economic constraints (Bucholtz, 2002).

In reviewing the literature concerning young people in non-Western societies several common features stand out as cultural factors that differ to Western societies, that impact on ‘adolescence’. In many non-Western societies family structure differs significantly to the nuclear family of the West (Santa-Maria, 2004; Verma & Saraswathi, 2004). Joint (extended) family structures are the norm, sometimes extending to include entire villages, and collectivism rather than individualism is the encompassing principle (Stevenson & Zusho, 2004; Theron & Theron, 2013; Verma & Saraswathi, 2004). There is a shared production and consumption of resources, and family members have defined roles based on age, gender and family position (Santa-Maria, 2004).

Cultural norms influence gender socialization which plays a role in how young people experience ‘adolescence’. The literature reflects that in non-Western contexts the onset of puberty results in the freedom of young girls being curtailed, and their interactions with boys, outside the family system,
either severely restricted or entirely forbidden (Booth, 2004; Verma & Saraswathi, 2004). It would be tempting to suggest that this would decrease opportunities for peer group relations, but Verma and Saraswathi (2004) suggest that peer relations play a less significant role in some communities, and the nature of the extended family provides scope for sanctioned interactions with peers of either sex. Interestingly, Verma and Saraswathi (2004) observe a variation in peer relationships by locale and class, noting that mothers living in slum areas restricted the amount of time their daughters spent with same sex peers, fearing the effects of bad influences, whereas in rural contexts girls routinely gather together in the execution of shared tasks.

However, this is not to say that peer relationships are not important to young people in non-Western societies. A peer culture characterised by a distinct and shared style of dress, hair, music and language, and influenced by the media is emerging in several regions of the world (Booth, 2004; Verma & Saraswathi, 2004). Stevenson and Zusho (2004) comment on peer dating in China and Japan as an emerging trend among young people, which is a challenge to culturally held norms. In addition, several authors remark on the increased amount of free time, disposable income and growing consumerism among young people, and that young people are expecting to have more of a say in their own lives (Booth, 2004; Santa-Maria, 2004; Stevenson & Zusho, 2004; Verma & Saraswathi, 2004). However, these trends are noted chiefly among the middle to upper classes and the wealthy; ‘traditional’ values and norms appear to be slower to change among poorer or rural populations (Stevenson & Zusho, 2004; Verma & Saraswathi, 2004).

2.2.3. Adolescence in an African context

According to Nsamenang (2004) the traditional African family structure extends beyond the Western nuclear unit, and is a fluid system in which connections are made through blood, marriage, kinship adoptions and shared cultural and economic factors. Nsamenang (2004) offers an eloquent description of the African worldview as relational and interdependent, which regards the person as ‘becoming’, and children as active agents developing in a particular socio-cultural field. (Nsamenang, 2004). The onset of puberty is marked by rituals or rites of passage, and on their journey to adulthood, young people construct and modify their social identities through interpersonal encounters and experiences, and are provided with opportunities to make sense of the adult roles they are expected to assume. In the process young people construct a gender and ethnic identity in keeping with cultural norms (Nsamenang, 2004). Thus, according to Nsamenang (2004), adolescence in an African context is a distinct phase with specific tasks and requirements of the young person, family and community.

However, the African family is subject to the same outside forces such as globalization, the world economic order and Western interests as other countries, and, as elsewhere in the world, family
functions and socialization processes are being influenced by schooling, education and commercialization (Arndt & Naude, 2016; Booth, 2004). The African family system is in a state of flux as it attempts to balance the competing values of traditionalism and modernism, reflecting the tensions experienced in other cultures (Arndt & Naude, 2016; Booth, 2004; Nsamenang, 2004; Verma & Saraswathi, 2004). In addition, many African societies are attempting to forge post-colonial identities. Cultural values, practices and norms are being reinvented, or hybridized, as societies negotiate the transformation processes between cultural systems and differences (Jacobs, 2013). Young people occupy these transitional spaces and have to establish their identities in different ways to their parents or grandparents (Arndt & Naude, 2016; Jacobs, 2013).

Finally the African continent is also characterized by political turmoil and change, conflict and exploitation, and sadly, young people frequently suffer the brunt of such insult. The stark reality of child soldiers, young people killing and torturing civilians and their own family members, children and adolescents as diamond diggers or labourers in the textile industry, or the persecution of children as witches or harbingers of illness or misfortune are documented in Boas and Hatloy (2008), Robinson (2012) and Seekings (2006), and serve as reminders that the consequences of political, social and economic upheaval are not confined to changes in family structure and tensions between traditionalism and modernism.

2.2.4. Adolescence in South Africa

Young people in South Africa face numerous challenges as they navigate adolescence and move into adulthood. Unemployment is a serious problem; of working age adults (defined as individuals between the ages of 15 and 64) 25% are unemployed (Dawson, 2014). The unemployment rate of individuals under the age of 25 is 50%, accounting for 30% of the total number of unemployed people (Dawson, 2014). The recent global recession impacted most significantly on youth unemployment (Statistics South Africa, 2015). This impact was exacerbated by embedded structural faults in the labour market resulting from the disparity between skills and available jobs (Statistics South Africa, 2015). The majority of employed youth have an education level below matric (grade 12), and those young people fortunate enough to secure employment hold mostly low-skilled occupations (Statistics South Africa, 2015).

Further, according to recent figures published by Department of Higher Education and Training (2017), the persons not in employment, education or training (NEET) rate for young people aged between 15 and 24 is 40.3%, representing 15 million young South Africans. The NEET population increased from 14.1 million in 2013 to 14.8 million in 2016. The highest number of NEETs is among YP who have secondary school education less than grade 12, and the NEET rate is higher for young
women than for young men (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2017). As a result, YP are facing a more complex and challenging transition to adulthood, as the widening gap between expected and actual experiences of attainment of adulthood markers such as independence, marriage, setting up a household and starting a family, are delayed by the collapse of employment opportunities and YPs’ ability to access employment and training (Dawson, 2014).

However, unemployment is only one of the challenges facing young South Africans. Other challenges, particular to South Africa, are noted in the literature, and impact on adolescence and adolescents. The literature reflects that young people are disproportionately affected by crime, (Seekings, 2006; Statistics South Africa, 2016b) and experience uneven access to schools and tertiary education (Hall, 2016b). Nduna and Jewkes (2012) provide a comprehensive, if somewhat depressing, overview of some of the challenges facing young people in the Eastern Cape, where this study was located, including stigma and bullying, sexual and physical violence, and describe severe poverty, parental absence or death and large dysfunctional families as “endemic” (Nduna & Jewkes, 2012, p. 1018).

Of particular relevance to this study is the issue of orphans, as many young people come into contact with the statutory system upon the death of one or both parents (Mturi, 2012). Operario, Cluver, Rees, MacPhail, and Pettifor (2008) discuss orphanhood in the South African context, stating that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of orphaned children and young people due to the HIV pandemic in recent years. Hall and Sambu (2016) state that in 2014 there were three million orphans in South Africa, representing 16% of the total number of children in the country. This has serious consequences for young people in terms of loss of family income, poorer health, emotional difficulties and disruption of family systems (Operario et al., 2008). It also results in unexpected, and perhaps, unwanted responsibilities for extended or elderly family members, as the burden of raising more, or another generation of children falls to them. Given the high levels of unemployment and poverty in South Africa, the inclusion of orphans into a family system represents a significant financial responsibility (Dawson, 2014; Mattes, 2012). Orphaned young people are shown to have lower school attendance and higher non-completion of high school rates, which may be attributed to the costs attendant to education in South Africa (Operario et al., 2008). School fees, uniforms, books and stationery are all compulsory expenses in South African schools, and place a significant burden on already limited family finances. Orphaned young people may be taken out of school to reduce costs and provide household income in the form of labour (Nduna & Jewkes, 2012; Operario et al., 2008). This has an obvious impact on their life chances, and contributes to the cycle of poverty.
Not all young people living with extended family members are orphans; a significant number of parents are simply absent, or unable to parent their children, who are then ‘fostered’, either formally or informally, by family members (Meintjies, Hall, Double-Hugh, & Boulle, 2010). The ensuing problems are the same: dislocated and disrupted families as siblings are frequently separated, poor life chances, exploitative and differential treatment, and unequal access to family resources (Nduna & Jewkes, 2012).

However, not all children who are orphaned or without parents, for any of the reasons cited above, live with family members. The increase in the number of orphans between 2002 and 2010 (Hall & Sambu, 2016; van Dijk & van Driel, 2009) placed families under considerable stress. In the African culture, according to tradition and custom orphaned children would be absorbed into the extended family (Mturi, 2012). But the increased numbers of orphaned or vulnerable children, and changing family dynamics have caused this system to fracture, and the care of orphaned or vulnerable children by family members can no longer be assumed (Mturi, 2012). In an effort to address this situation, the South African government has promoted foster care and adoption as strategies to protect vulnerable children (Bonthuys, 2010; Department of Social Development, 2005). However, these have not been wholly successful, and children and YP are placed in CYCCs when there are no family members available, or willing to take them into the family system.

### 2.2.5. Politics and adolescents

It is difficult to discuss adolescence, and adolescents, in the South African context without making mention of the role of politics in the lives of young South Africans, both historically and currently. The role of young people in the international political arena has a well-documented history. Students were at the forefront of the liberation movement in the United States (Bradley, 2010; Franklin, 2003). Lieberman and Cochran (2001) speak of the role of young people in the protests against the invasion of Cambodia during the Vietnam War, and Clegg (2010) provides a moving litany of professionals, scholars and student activists executed, exiled or imprisoned for opposing oppressive regimes and standing up for human rights.

Young South Africans played a prominent and pivotal role in the defiance of the apartheid state, spearheading the movement to make townships ungovernable and protesting against discriminatory services and education (Macqueen, 2013; Seekings, 2006). The youth rebellion of the 1980s marked a turning point in the struggle against apartheid, and the mobilization and resistance of the youth was instrumental in heralding the end of the apartheid era (Dawson, 2014). A consequence of their political involvement was a polarized construction of young people as heroes or villains; either heroes of the political struggle for liberation, or violent, threatening and uncontrolled villains (Dawson,
Seekings (2006) maintains that this dichotomous construal of young people was simplistic, and suggests that it overlooked the young people involved who were thoughtful leaders with clear political goals, or who had genuine civic and educational objections or even a romanticised warrior-hero image. Further, youth activists were not an homogenous group, but comprised students of school age and in tertiary education, young working people, young parents and gang members (Seekings, 2006). Unfortunately, young objectors did not only direct their activities toward the state, but toward the people themselves, targeting alleged collaborators, instigating and overseeing ‘people’s courts’ and perpetrating the sexual abuse of young women, all of which fuelled the fear of youth activists (Macqueen, 2013; Seekings, 2006).

In the move towards political transformation the understanding of the young people of the struggle epoch discussed above prevailed. Youth were marginalized and portrayed as the ‘lost generation’, and were thought to pose a social and moral threat to the emerging political era (Dawson, 2014; Seekings, 2006). This prompted a ‘moral panic’ that resulted in a slew of studies and political attention to the ‘problem’ youth. However, as events unfolded it became apparent that the transition to democracy was not going to be destabilized by militant, angry young people, and the moral panic subsided (Dawson, 2014; Seekings, 2006). Seekings (2006) asserts that the generalized understanding of youth at the time, was informed by research that focussed on atypical subsamples of activist youth, and that the resulting perceptions were erroneous. Other research suggested that the majority of young people in South Africa were church going, participated in sport and were “positive and ambitious about life” (Seekings, 2006, p. 5).

The problems that face young South Africans have been detailed previously in section 2.2.4 of this chapter, but some authors assert that there is a decline in the priority given to the problems specific to young people in the new South Africa. Seekings (2006) goes so far as to say that it is the absence of concern about young people that is the most striking feature of post-apartheid South Africa, a comment echoed by Mosele (2015). One possible explanation for this lack is that the problems of young people are dwarfed by broader and deeper concerns in society. Problems of deepening unemployment, rising crime, entrenched poverty, everyday violence and the breakdown of family and communities beleaguer South African society. It seems that the problems specific to young people are subsumed into the scope of broader and deeper social challenges (Dawson, 2014; Malila, Oelofsen, Garman, & Wasserman, 2013; Seekings, 2006).

It has been suggested that childhood and adolescence are shaped by historical events and context (Bucholtz, 2002). Mattes (2012) asserts that the ‘born free’ generation (those born after 1994, when South Africa became a non-racial democracy) faces similar, perhaps greater levels of poverty,
inequality and hopelessness as their parents. Mattes (2012, p. 140) further states that official segregation has been replaced by “informal class segregation”, and points to inequalities of education and resources and the widening income gap between the richest and poorest in South Africa as factors impacting on the youth in post-apartheid South Africa. Once again, young people are emerging at the forefront of ‘new’ social movements, engaging in protest and fomenting unrest (Malila et al., 2013). This raises questions about how young people see themselves as citizens, and the acquisition of political identity (Malila et al., 2013). Seekings (2006) identifies a substantial body of literature that examines the experiences of young people with regard to family structure and dynamics, violence and abuse, sexuality and sexual behaviour, but maintains that the question – ‘What does it mean to be young, of a particular ethnic, cultural, language group in a time of violent political conflict?’ – has been largely unaddressed.

In addressing this question, recent studies by Arndt and Naude (2016), Kamper and Badenhorst (2010) and Steyn, Badenhorst, and Kamper (2010) may be regarded as the starting points of discussion that begins to unpack the experience of being an adolescent in the new South Africa. All of these authors comment on the social upheaval and political reform that shape the backdrop against which South African adolescents must not only adapt, but also develop their own identities. However, Kamper and Badenhorst (2010) suggest that although the current generation of South African adolescents, are politically aware, they are not as politically engaged as their predecessors, and comments on a growing individualism among South African youth. The work of Arndt and Naude (2016, p. 268) highlights that black South African adolescents straddle two worlds: one that encompasses their “African world view and African-centred value systems”, and the other that adopts Western lifestyles and a “globalized world view”. Arndt and Naude (2016) go on to suggest that the blending of these two worlds into a transitional culture warrants further exploration.

In discussing adolescence as a life stage in different environments, it is apparent that the construct of adolescence differs according to context and culture. Fahlberg (as cited in Howe, 1995, p. 132) sees the adolescent as trying to answer four pivotal questions: who am I, where do I belong, what can I do or be and what do I believe in? It seems that these questions may be universal, but the answers, and how they are arrived at, are shaped by the cultural context of the young person asking them. However, Bradford-Brown and Larson (2004) maintain that although adolescence, as conceptualized and presented by Western research, may not be relevant across all cultures, certain biological, developmental and psychological tasks are universal. Perhaps the most significant developmental and psychological task of adolescence is identity formation. The hormonal and body changes of adolescence are well known and documented, but the biological changes that take place as the
adolescent brain develops are no less significant, particularly in the context of YPIC and their possible experience of Complex Developmental Trauma.

2.2.6. **Identity development in adolescence**

Adolescence is a time of transition, where the teenager learns how to navigate new social challenges and terrains, and adjusts to many physical, emotional and cognitive changes and challenges (Akister, Owens, & Goodyer, 2010). It is generally understood, in both academic and popular literature, as a turbulent time, characterised by risk taking and irresponsible behaviour (Crone & Dahl, 2012; Steinberg, 2007). Adolescence is recognised as a distinct developmental stage, with specific developmental tasks and challenges, such as the development of identity, relationships with peers, changing relationships with parents, sexual identity and autonomy, academic performance and ‘trying on’ of potential future identities (Feldstein & Miller, 2006; Knox, Funk, Elliott, & Bush, 2000). Eric Erikson (1902-1994) is widely recognized as the founding theorist in the conceptual development of the life stage of adolescence and its associated developmental tasks (Bronk, 2011; Faber, Edwards, Bauer, & Wetchler, 2003; Santrock, 2013). According to Erikson’s life stage theory, adolescence lasts between the ages of 10 and 20 years. The key developmental task of this stage is developing an identity; failure to resolve this task results in identity confusion (Santrock, 2013).

There are many theories about what identity is and how it is formed. The early psychoanalytic work of Freud regarded the self as being shaped in the constant tension between ego states, and that self was formed by the age of 5 with little room for change thereafter (Schultz & Schultz, 2009). This deterministic view of self has been steadily eroded as different theories evolved, beginning with the work of Neo-psychoanalysts. Theorists such as Jung, Adler and Hornby took a more optimistic view of identity, suggesting that self is part innate and part learned, and social forces rather than biological characteristics contribute significantly to the shaping of identity (Schultz & Schultz, 2009). Trait theory also takes an optimistic view of identity, emphasising the uniqueness of the individual, but maintaining that individual traits remain consistent over time. Other psychological theories of identity include the cognitive, behavioural, humanistic and social learning approaches of Kelly, Skinner, Maslow and Rogers, and Bandura respectively (Schultz & Schultz, 2009).

Classic sociological theory also offers ideas about identity, the works Cooley and Mead suggesting that self is shaped from everyday relations and interactions with others (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Holstein & Gubrim, 2000). Cooley’s looking glass theory suggested that identity is a reflection of the feedback one receives from others about self (Kroger, 2007). Mead held that the self is a social structure that emerges through social experience and activity, and people define themselves according to how they perceive others responding to them (Holstein & Gubrim, 2000; Kroger, 2007). Gegen
Identity theory proposes that identity is formed in the context of various social roles and relationships. As such, it is a relatively fluid concept, as a person may have as many distinct selves as they have groups within which they function. As these social groups and relationships change over time, so does the self (Hogg et al., 1995; Merolla, Serpe, Stryker, & Schultz, 2012). Thus, identity theory regards the self, not as an autonomous psychological entity, but as a “multi-faceted social construct that emerges from people’s roles in society” (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 256), and Stets and Burke (2014) outline three bases of identity: social/group identities, role and person identity.

Social identities refer to how people identify themselves as belonging to a particular social category, such as ethnicity or gender, whereas group identities emphasise interactions with a specific set of others, for example, family or sport club (Stets & Burke, 2014). Social and group identities rely on receiving recognition and approval from others, and thus may be a source of self-esteem or distress, depending on the feedback received (Stets & Cast, 2007). Role identities are formed from the meanings people attribute to the self when they take on a particular role in society, such as student or spouse (Stets & Burke, 2014). Role identities are primarily performance based, and can also be a source of self-esteem, or distress depending on how the individual evaluates their performance in terms of their internalized meanings to a particular role (Stets & Burke, 2014). Personal identity is that which people claim for themselves as their set of unique characteristics that sets them apart from others. These unique self-meanings encompass values, morals and characteristics, and are held as core concepts that serve to guide behaviour across situations (Stets & Burke, 2014).

Merolla et al. (2012) argue that social structures, and the location of the individual within those structures also contribute to identity formation. Large social structures comprise race, nationality, class and gender. Intermediate structures are more localized and include neighbourhoods and schools. Proximal structures are those closest to the person, for example family or social clubs, and these are the most significant in identity formation (Merolla et al., 2012). Merolla et al. (2012) suggest that involvement in proximal structures provides people with particularly relevant social roles, and is foundational to commitment to and salience of such identities, which in turn shapes intent for future behaviour (Merolla et al., 2012).

These sources of identity are of particular relevance to YPIC. They belong to a marginalized group of individuals, with limited resources and opportunities to expand their ‘repertoire’ of social, group and role identities, and whose personal, behavioural and academic limitations may not be conducive to developing competencies and receiving positive feedback. Thus the CYCC has a critical role to
play in identity formation by providing positive interactions, across social, group, role and personal spheres, as well as expanding social capital to maximise the impact of proximal structures.

Of particular relevance to this study is Erikson’s life-span approach to identity. According to Kroger (2007), Erikson focussed attention on identity as a concept, and his life stage model proposes that identity, and its formation, involves the emergence of new intra-psychic structure that is more than the sum of previous childhood identification (Kroger, 2007). According to Erikson’s theory, identity formation begins in childhood and continues life-long, but takes centre stage during adolescence as the principal task of this developmental phase (Carlsson, Wanqvist, & Fristen, 2015; Crocetti, Erentaite, & Zukauskine, 2014; Kroger, 2007). Jones, Vaterlaus, Jackson, and Morrill (2013) provide a neatly encapsulated summary of the stages of development that must be resolved before the child reaches adolescence, placing the various developmental crises within their social contexts as well as their epigenetic imperatives. Essentially, parents and family influence the early stages of trust and autonomy. This expands to include schools, teachers and technology who develop industry, and the whole is located within the economic and cultural context of the child and family (Jones et al., 2013).

It is the focus on the significance of adolescence and identity that makes Erikson’s theory appropriate to this work, although the relevance of the theory in current times has been questioned. Jones et al. (2013) and Schachter (2005) observe that the nature of the family has changed considerably in recent decades and the nuclear family is not the dominant family model in contemporary society. For example, children may spend more time in the company of caregivers than with their parents. In addition, sweeping changes in the education system, and dramatic changes in communication technology shape a very different social context to the one in existence when Erikson wrote his theory (Jones et al., 2013; Schachter, 2005). However, both Jones et al. (2013) and Schachter (2005) argue that the theory still has relevance, as parents and siblings still have influence on psychosocial development and identity, but the range of influences has expanded to include others, and the modes of communication (particularly for adolescents) has changed in the face of technological advances and social media.

2.2.7. Identity development and YPIC

Identity may be described as those beliefs and aims that are personally meaningful, and which contribute to a consistent sense of who a person is and hopes to become (Bronk, 2011; Pittman, Keiley, Kerpelman, & Vaughn, 2011). The development of identity is multifaceted, and developing a philosophy of life and a coherent idea about career, and establishing moral, ethnic, religious, political and sexual identities are all components of the adolescent’s emerging identity (Bronk, 2011; Pittman et al., 2011). Developing an identity requires a period of exploration, which is founded on a
secure home base (Faber et al., 2003). As people progress through adolescence they develop an idea of who they are, separate from their family of origin and as members of a wider community. In this respect YPIC may be disadvantaged in the establishment of their own identity.

By definition, YPIC do not have a secure family base from which to explore their emerging identity. Many YPIC may have little, if any, contact with their family of origin or extended family members (Höjer & Sjöblom, 2009). Frequently YPIC are unclear about the reasons for their initial placement in care, and the reasons for their continued placement in the system (Bond, 2010; Stein, 2008). Stein (2008) asserts that failing to assist YPIC to understand the reasons for their placement and process their associated feelings, presents the main barrier to YPIC forming a sound sense of identity. Integrating loss and sadness is an important aspect developing self and self-identity (Fattore, Mason, & Watson, 2008). A coherent life story forms the platform from which the adolescent develops his or her own identity. Sadly, this self-knowledge is frequently lacking in YPIC (Murray, Malone, & Glare, 2008; Stein, 2008). A sense of knowing who one is in relation to a family system may be regarded as foundational to the developmental task of separating from one’s family. If the adolescent has no real connection to their family or coherent life history to draw on, they may find this developmental task significantly more challenging than their peers who are not in care (Stein, 2008).

As the teenager progresses through adolescence she increasingly turns to her peers and romantic partners as a source of attachments. The peer group becomes an important source of feedback and affirmation that helps to shape the adolescent’s budding adult identity (Laible, Carlo, & Roesch, 2004). However, this is not to say that the parental role in shaping emerging identity is any less important than in previous developmental stages. Rather, the parental role in identity formation throughout adolescence is one of providing a safe base from which the teenager explores aspects of self, and which promotes self-development (Laible et al., 2004). Once again, it is possible that YPIC are at a disadvantage in this process. First because they lack a secure parental base, second because many YPIC experience the care context as something that separates them from their peers who are not in the care system, and third because YPIC forge social bonds based on similar life experiences and situation with their peers within the CYCC (Stanley, 2007; Torronen, 2009). Given that many YPIC present with behavioural issues, these relationships may not be the most helpful influences on an emerging identity (Ajdukovic & Franz, 2005; Gibbs & Sinclair, 2000).

Unfortunately for YPIC, their opportunities to make meaningful and sustained connections to more helpful peer groups are limited within the CYCC setting. Funds and resources are limited, and have to be shared among all the children in the centre, and so providing opportunities for extra-mural activities, or group activities such as youth groups or camps, is limited. Even in situations where
funding may not be an issue, if perhaps sponsorship has been offered or arranged, limitations with regard to transport constrain the YPICs ability to capitalize on outside activities that may increase their positive social capital, and expose them to new and different experiences (Zetlin et al., 2010). Further, the literature suggests that staff in children’s homes are reluctant to enrol YPIC in afterhours activities due to the challenges of transporting many children (Zetlin et al., 2010). This can be regarded as a significant failing on the part of the care system. Encouraging YP to develop a range of competencies underpins their identity and self-esteem, and presents an opportunity to balance the risk of developing a stereotyped identity of ‘children’s home child’ (Gilligan, 2008).

2.2.8. Development of the brain in adolescence

Adolescence is a critical time for the development of brain processes that are the foundation of higher cognitive functions and social and emotional behaviour (Spear, 2000b; Yurgelun-Todd, 2007). In recent years, the use of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) technology has provided more detailed information of how the brain changes over time (Casey, Tottenham, Liston, & Durston, 2005). Recent studies of children and adolescents using MRI technology have provided opportunities to better understand the neurobiological changes and functional abilities associated with brain maturation (Crone & Dahl, 2012; Yurgelun-Todd, 2007).

The development of the brain during adolescence involves widespread changes, and the brain continues to develop into the early adult years (Steinberg, 2008). The maturation of the brain is seen as complete in terms of ratios of grey and white matter; an increase in white matter indicates an increase in the myelination of axons, which results in improved connectivity between regions of the brain (Fine & Sung, 2014). Remodelling of grey and white matter, and the maturation of the prefrontal cortex occur throughout adolescence and into early adulthood (Casey, Galvan, & Hare, 2005; Fine & Sung, 2014; Yurgelun-Todd, 2007). This is significant as the prefrontal cortex is the area of the brain associated with higher cognitive functioning, such as inducing, reasoning, planning and increased capacity for self-regulation (Crone & Dahl, 2012; Jaffee, 2007; Yurgelun-Todd, 2007). The prefrontal cortex matures more slowly than other areas of the brain, and adolescents process information differently and enlist different regions of the brain to adults (Casey, Galvan, & Hare, 2005). The development of this area of the brain parallels improvements in cognitive control and behavioural inhibition that are seen as the adolescent moves into adulthood (Steinberg, 2007; Yurgelun-Todd, 2007).

For YPIC, the development of the brain during adolescence, and of these capacities, may be impacted by the experiences that led to their admission into the statutory system. In high risk situations, the brain responds by shaping neural pathways in a manner that might be adaptive at the time, but proves
to be maladaptive in the long term (Fine & Sung, 2014; Jaffee, 2007; Karatsoreos & McEwen, 2013). Early thinking suggested that brain development was complete by the end of early childhood, which essentially condemned children in care to a lifetime of cognitive and behavioural difficulties (Fine & Sung, 2014). However, the developments discussed above indicate that the plasticity of the brain allows for brain development over a much longer time frame than originally thought, which is encouraging as it implies the possibility for improved outcomes.

Jaffee (2007) suggests that just as the brain adaptively develops in contexts of abuse, it may also adaptively develop when a child is placed in improved circumstances. Fine and Sung (2014) and Jaffee (2007) maintain that early intervention, and stimulation and emotional support moderate the consequences of early biological and environmental experiences, and serve to normalize brain function. Adequate nutrition, stimulation, warm, caring relationships and self-regulation are resilience factors that appear to be significant contributors to the reorganizing of neural systems, particularly those that are used in cognition and behaviour (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Jaffee, 2007; Yousafzai, Rasheed, & Bhatta, 2013). Thus intervention may be instrumental in improving the cognitive and behavioural foundation of children in care, on which the later brain developmental changes are made, therefore promoting better outcomes.

2.2.9. Complex Developmental Trauma (CDT)

Whatever the reason for their placement in care, YPIC often share similar behavioural outcomes. This can be attributed to shared common experiences leading to Complex Developmental Trauma (CDT). Trauma, in a general population of children, can be induced by a variety of factors, ranging from illness or hospitalization to natural disasters. YPIC share backgrounds of abuse, either sexual, verbal or physical, or of neglect and maltreatment, all of which can result in CDT (Perry, 1994; Purvis et al., 2013; van der Kolk, 2005). There is wide spread discussion concerning the long term social and behavioural effects of inadequate attachments on children in care (Haight, Kagel, & Black, 2003; Howe, 1995, 2006). Maltreatment during early childhood can cause vital regions of the brain to develop improperly, and the findings of neuroscience are consistent with attachment research (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000; Becker-Weidman, 2009). Both suggest that children subjected to ongoing abuse/neglect, particularly in the context of primary care-giver relationships, differ in their neurobiological development to children who do not experience abuse/neglect (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000; van der Kolk & Courtois, 2005).

Abused and neglected children show a variety of neurobiological abnormalities that affect long-term psychological and physiological functioning (van der Kolk & Courtois, 2005). Neurotransmitters and hormones play a key role in overall brain development. Prolonged and/or severe stress causes a
significant and consistent increase in neurotransmitter activity which can cause damage to brain structures (Perry, 1994). Elevated levels of neuroendocrine hormones, for example cortisol, may cause permanent damage to the hippocampus which is critical for memory (Becker-Weidman, 2009). The overall effect is to change the nature of the development of brain pathways in young children (Becker-Weidman, 2009). Unfortunately, the plasticity of the brain in infants and young children make it susceptible to trauma induced developmental change. Adults produce state memory in response to trauma, resulting in sensitization or learning, which in turn leads to altered behaviour (Perry, Pollard, Blaicley, Baker, & Vigilante, 1995). However, in infants and young children, traumatic experience forms the organizing framework of the brain and responses (Perry et al., 1995). Thus, states become traits in young children and have far reaching consequences for later development (Perry et al., 1995).

The consequences of CDT can be seen across a variety of emotional, cognitive and mental health problems in YPIC (Becker-Weidman, 2009). Brain development that is altered as a result of increased brain chemistry manifests as problems with memory, learning and concentration. These problems are seen over the course of childhood and adolescence in YPIC, and, if addressed at all, are commonly addressed as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), or conduct or learning disorders, which are incomplete diagnoses (Perry, 1994). Further, CDT increases the risk of the development of mental health problems in adolescence and adulthood (Perry et al., 1995). This is of particular significance as CLs are over represented in populations receiving mental health services (Dixon, 2008; Freundlich, Avery, & Padgett, 2007).

The brain pathways that are responsible for social perception are the same pathways that integrate functions such as the creation of meaning, regulation of body states and emotions, organization of memory, personal communication and empathy (Becker-Weidman, 2009). These areas are particularly relevant in adolescent development. In Becker-Weidman’s (2009) study of children and young people between the ages of 2 and 18 with histories of chronic early maltreatment, the older group of participants (14 to 18 years old) showed more difficulties, specifically a greater delay, in socialization and adaptive behaviours, and significant difficulties in daily living skills (Becker-Weidman, 2009). These are of particular significance when considering the challenges faced and experienced by YPIC, for example behavioural issues in the classroom setting, and CLs, such as lack of social skills in the work place or poor financial management.

Thus it can be argued that brain maturation during adolescence for YPIC may be significantly compromised and/or delayed by the effects of CDT. Becker-Weidman (2009) notes that there is a difference between the chronological and developmental age of YP with CDT, and observes that the
instruction to “act your age” may not be possible for YP with this kind of delay. Thus expecting YP from a care setting to take on adult responsibilities simply on the grounds of their having arrived at the age of majority is unrealistic, especially in the context of limited resources for remedial interventions and the absence of follow up services post discharge. This is of particular concern, given that many YPIC are discharged from the system upon reaching the age of majority, sometimes earlier, and are expected to segue seamlessly, and instantly, from adolescence to adulthood. Arnett (2000) posited that the move from adolescence to adulthood has undergone changes in the past several decades, and suggests a prolonged transition is now commonplace. Arnett’s (2000) theory of ‘Emerging Adulthood’ covers the phase between the ages of 18 and 25 years and is a useful framework for understanding the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

### 2.2.10. Emerging adulthood

A South African child becomes an adult, in the law, on the day he or she turns 18 years of age (RSA, 2005). There is an assumption that because a YP has crossed this legal line and achieved the age of majority she can be productive and self-reliant (Henig, 2009). The challenge with this view is that it is not applicable for YP who are raised outside the care system, still less for CLs (Henig, 2009; Wade & Dixon, 2006). In general, YP are taking longer to become fully independent adults, and the signifiers for achieving adult status have changed (Munson, Lee, Miller, Cole, & Nedelcu, 2013). The theory of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) recognises these changes, and argues that Erikson’s psychosocial stage theory, while relevant to the socio-economic conditions at the time, no longer applies to the realities of adolescence and adulthood in the 21st century (Arnett, 2007).

Arnett (2000) suggests that Emerging Adulthood (EA) is a distinct developmental phase that is different to both adolescence and adulthood. The adolescent is still subject to the restrictions of high school, is going through puberty and is most usually living at home. Young adults have settled into stable work, marriage and parenthood, the roles usually associated with adulthood (Arnett, 2007). Emerging adults are between the two stages; they have left the dependency of childhood and adolescence, but have not yet assumed the roles and responsibilities of adulthood (Cohen, Kasen, Chen, Hartmark, & Gordon, 2003). EA is characterised by feeling in between, as well as identity exploration, self-focus, instability and exploring possibilities (Munson et al., 2013). EA is a time when the process of individuation and autonomy is delayed and the search for identity that begins in adolescence continues (Cohen et al., 2003). According to Arnett (2000) this absence of role constraints allows the emerging adult a wider scope of possible activities than at any other life stage.

Arnett (2000) argues that the evolution of the life stage of EA has been driven by demographic shifts and changing economic forces over the last 50 years. For example, during the 1970’s in the United
States the average age of marriage was 21 for women and 23 for men. By the mid 1990’s these ages had risen to 25 and 27 respectively, and the age of first childbirth reflected a similar trend (Arnett, 2007). Current figures in South Africa reflect that the median age of marriage is 30 and 34 for females and males respectively (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Changes in the economic climate resulted in more YP pursuing tertiary qualifications, thus delaying their entry into the work place. This also resulted in an extended period of financial and residential dependence on parents. Economic conditions have also impacted on YP attempting to enter the lower end of the job market, as employment opportunities are fewer and wages insufficient to meet the demands of independent living. The net result is that YP in general are relying for longer on parental support (Cohen et al., 2003). Arnett (2000) maintains that this allows YP an extended period during which they can experiment with life choices related to love, work and world view. He further suggests that EA is normative at present, and for the foreseeable future in industrialized societies and predicts that the same pattern of delayed adulthood will emerge in developing countries (Arnett, 2001).

EA, as a theory, has attracted comment. According to Côté and Bynner (2008), an extended transition to adulthood is not necessarily a recent phenomenon. They cite the example of the servant class of the nineteenth century delaying marriage and parenthood into their 30s, and liken this to the student ‘class’ of today. Bynner (2005) asserts that an extended period of adolescence, ending around the age of 25, was recognised in literature as early as 1904, and that the notion of emerging adulthood has been widely discussed in European social sciences since the 1980s.

Hendry and Kloep (2007) agree that YP are faced with significant challenges in achieving adulthood, that the developmental tasks associated with arriving at adult status are differently ordered, and that these changes result from rapidly changing socio-economic conditions. However, they argue that EA is not a universal life stage, but is culturally dependant, as it examines the opportunities afforded to Western YP of wealthy or middle class backgrounds. They further maintain that variations between individuals and across cultures are not captured in generalised statements about emerging adults (Hendry & Kloep, 2007). A brief synopsis of various studies that examine EA in different cultural contexts is offered by Munson et al. (2013), which supports the view that EA, as presented by Arnett (2000), does not capture the experiences of all groups of YP. Hendry and Kloep (2007) suggest that EA does not carry sufficient weight to be considered a theory, but is rather a description of a particular group of people in a particular context and time.

EA is not universally accepted as a theory per se, but has been widely adopted as a framework for understanding the experiences of YP transitioning into adulthood across varied domains, for example YP in prisons (Comfort, 2012), Intimate Partner Violence (Lohman, Neppl, Senia, & Schofield,
2013), shyness and anxiety (McNamara, Nelson, & Christofferson, 2013), sexual behaviours and mental health (Sandberg-Thoma & Kamp Dush, 2014), smoking (Mathur, Stigler, Erickson, Perry, & Forster, 2014), substance abuse (Snyder & Monroe, 2013), and risk factors for depression (Vida, Lisznyai, Németh, & Benczúr, 2014).

It would seem that the reality for YP with parents in lower socio-economic groups is that there is little chance of enjoying an extended transition into adulthood (Cohen et al., 2003). This group of YP shows higher rates of being sexually active from an early age, early marriage and parenthood. They may reside for longer periods with their family of origin, but this is frequently of necessity, and within the home they may take on a more adult role in terms of financial contribution than more privileged youth (Cohen et al., 2003). Arnett (2007) maintains that his research shows that YP from lower socio-economic groups are optimistic about their futures, but other research suggests that vulnerable YP are more likely to have unrealistic views of themselves and their futures (van Breda, 2010). The documented experiences of YP transitioning out of care mirror the findings above, but there are few studies examining the experience of EA in CLs (Berzin, Singer, & Hokanson, 2014; Dixon, 2008; Munson et al., 2013; Wade & Dixon, 2006).

However, the literature that is available that examines the experiences of CLs suggests that this group of YP does not have the luxury of an extended transition to adulthood (Rogers, 2011). YP are discharged from the statutory system with little or no consultation or preparation for the event and subsequent changes (Freundlich et al., 2007; Kaplan, Skolnik, & Turnbull, 2009). Their pathway into adulthood is frequently accelerated and abrupt, and they face significant challenges across multiple spheres of living (del Valle et al., 2011; Stein, 2008; Tweddle, 2007). Unlike their non-cared for peers, CLs may lack adequate support systems. Their families of origin are often dysfunctional and unable to provide the kind of emotional, financial, educational or residential support described by Arnett (2000) (Cohen, 2011; Rogers, 2011). The withdrawal of the protection of the statutory system, and lack of follow up services puts further pressure on CLs to stand on their own feet without benefit of a gradual movement toward adulthood (Höjer & Sjöblom, 2009). Thus their trajectories into adulthood are likely to differ from those suggested by Arnett’s (2000) model (Munson et al., 2013). However, notwithstanding the above, EA offers a useful framework within which to place YP between the ages of 18 and 25, and from which to examine the experiences of YPIC as they transition out of the care system, particularly in light of the identified paucity of literature that addresses this subject (Berzin et al., 2014).

The literature review thus far has focused on various aspects of the life stage of adolescence. The concept of adolescence, how it is influenced and perceived by culture and social contexts, and its
relevance in different cultures has been discussed. Developmental aspects of identity formation, brain development and the impact of CDT have been examined, and the recent theory of Emerging Adulthood has been presented as a useful framework for considering the experiences of CLs. The discussion now moves on to present some of the issues surrounding adolescents as they transition from care and the outcomes associated with adolescent CLs.

2.3. Transition from care

For all YP, the transition to adulthood is a significant phase of life, but for CLs the transition from care to independent living is recognized as the most challenging and least successful aspect of the care system (Gharabagi & Groskleg, 2010; Höjer & Sjöblom, 2009). Unfortunately for YPIC the actual discharge and transition process represents a challenge in and of itself, and the pathway out of care impacts on the success, or not, of the CL. In addition, CLs face numerous challenges – personal, structural and environmental – as they exit the system, and show consistently poor outcomes over a range of domains crucial to successful living as adults (Dixon, 2008; Wade & Dixon, 2006). Education has a direct relationship to employment, and both are critical to securing adequate housing and maintaining good health. Unfortunately, CLs present with a range of health and mental health issues that remain largely unaddressed as CLs are frequently unable to access health care facilities. Pregnancy, alcohol and substance abuse and involvement with the criminal justice system are also negative outcomes associated with care leaving. Although the focus of this study is not the outcomes of care leaving, how young people see their futures and the preparation they receive for leaving care impacts on care leaving outcomes, hence their inclusion in this discussion.

2.3.1. Pathways out of care

The literature shows that CLs may follow several pathways out of care; they may ‘age out’ of care, remain in the care system until the maximum age permitted, or may chose to leave the care system. YP ‘age out’ of the care system when they reach an age where they no longer automatically qualify for state care. The age at which YP ‘age out’ varies from the age at which they are no longer legally obliged to attend school, in most countries 16 years of age, to the age at which they achieve their majority (English, Morreale, & Larsen, 2003; Goodkind, Schelbe, & Shook, 2011). Where legislation and funding allow, YP may remain in the care system until the age of 21 or 25, and the research shows that YPIC who choose to stay longer show better outcomes than those who opt to leave the care system earlier (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006; Goodkind et al., 2011).

Unfortunately, many YP choose not to remain in the care system, even when the option is available to them. These YP begin leaving soon after their 17th birthdays, and most have exited the system by
the age of 19 (McCoy, McMillen, & Spitznagel, 2008). YP with externalizing behaviours are more likely to exit the care system earlier. Other indicators for an early exit from care include a prior history of living on the street, multiple placements in the past year, behavioural disorders, alcohol and substance use/abuse and involvement with the criminal justice system (Goodkind et al., 2011; McCoy et al., 2008). Other YP who choose to leave the system frequently cite lack of autonomy and independence as reasons for wanting to get out of care. YP are resentful that decisions are made for them without consultation, and that they have few opportunities for self-determination (McCoy et al., 2008). These are issues common to the developmental phase of adolescence, and to be expected in a population of YP of this age. However, YPIC are particularly vulnerable to making poor decisions, as the adolescent brain is still undergoing considerable development, which in the case of YPIC may be further compromised by their life history and possible CDT. Goodkind et al. (2011) conducted in-depth interviews with YP between the ages of 18 and 23 who had either aged out, or were in the process of aging out, of the care system. Many of the YP in this study remarked that they wished they had remained in care for longer (Goodkind et al., 2011). This suggests that allowing some flexibility in the care leaving process might benefit YP who, with the benefit of experience, hindsight and maturity, might decide differently (Goodkind et al., 2011).

2.3.2. Preparation for discharge and exiting the care system

The transition from care for CLs is a complex process that should begin as early as possible in the care career of a child or YP, and should involve the child/YP at all stages (Coyle & Pinkerton, 2012). Unfortunately for many CLs, their exit from the care system is abrupt, with little, if any, collaborative planning or process of consultation (del Valle et al., 2011). To compound this experience, they are frequently discharged with few, if any, resources at their disposal or support networks in place, and seem to be expected to find their way into adulthood unaided (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006). Many YP are automatically discharged from the care system when they reach the age of 18 (Geenen & Powers, 2007). Henig (2009) maintains that there is an assumption that because a YP has achieved the age of majority, they are somehow instantly equipped to assume the responsibilities of adulthood. Betz (2010) observes that the discharge from care is seldom based on developmental maturity and readiness, but on age alone. This focus on chronological age means that YP may be forced to leave the protection of the care system before they are developmentally ready (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007). When development is regarded as linear and progressive it does not take into account individual variances in development, and how contextual life experiences can impact on development processes (Munson et al., 2013).

It has been discussed in this literature review that brain development (and thus developmental maturity) continues beyond adolescence and into a person’s early to mid-20s. It has also been argued
that YPIC have significant developmental delays across critical cognitive and social functioning domains. Further, Geenen and Powers (2007) maintain that being in care robs YP of developmentally appropriate experiences and opportunities for learning, further contributing to functional deficits. Thus it is unfortunate that developmental maturity is not a primary consideration when planning for the discharge of YPIC, as this could be argued as a critical factor in the success, or not, of the transition from care.

However, some CLs do experience easier transitions, and these YP differ in key respects to their cared for peers who experience difficulties. CLs who experience relatively positive transitions left care at a later age, felt involved with the planning process, and felt prepared to leave care (Nesmith & Christophersen, 2014). Further, they had a secure attachment to at least one person, and had support from outside social networks (Natalier & Johnson, 2012). Such social capital and leaving care services are significant to CLs as they are associated with higher numbers of CLs entering higher education and also increased numbers of CLs in employment or training programmes which contribute to an overall improved quality of life, both in the short and long term (Cashmore, Paxman, & Townsend, 2007; Driscoll, 2013).

The importance of social capital to CLs is widely discussed in the literature (Jones, 2014b; Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007; Stein, 2008). However, other factors may facilitate successful transitions from care. Geenen and Powers (2007) argue that young people need increased opportunities to control and direct their own lives while still in the care system, a position that is supported by Stott (2013). Giving YPIC responsibilities and ownership of decisions, providing them with opportunities to engage in and negotiate relationships, and to learn from gradual increases in freedoms is another key factor in successful transitions from care (Geenen & Powers, 2007; Stott, 2013). Geenen and Powers (2007) maintain that a more creative, flexible, and individualised approach to transition from care is needed, one that is driven by the needs of YPIC, and that recognizes the uniqueness of each YPs transition, rather than fitting YPIC into pre-determined and fixed systems and programmes (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007; Geenen & Powers, 2007).

An interesting approach to emerge in the Southern African literature is the application of the Sustainable Livelihoods theory to care-leaving processes (Mhongera & Lombard, 2016). The articles point to CLs in Southern Africa experiencing the same concerns and outcomes as their international peers (Mhongera & Lombard, 2016, 2017), but the application of the Sustainable Livelihoods approach is unique in the literature, and holds the promise of a practical, intervention based approach to the preparation for discharge, and better outcomes for CLs’ futures.
2.4. Outcomes associated with CLs

Section 2.4 discusses the outcomes associated with care leaving. The literature documents predominantly poor outcomes for CLs across numerous domains, including teenage pregnancy, health, mental health, substance abuse and involvement with the criminal justice system. This review will concentrate on the educational, employment and housing outcomes for CLs, as these are the most pressing initial concerns as CLs prepare to exit the statutory system.

2.4.1. Educational outcomes for CLs

The educational outcomes for CLs are widely recognized as a problematic and unsuccessful aspect of the care system (Martin & Jackson, 2002; Rogers, 2011; Zetlin et al., 2010). YPIC experience significant difficulties in school showing poorer grades in maths and reading, delays of at least half a school year, and many YPIC repeat at least one grade (Cashmore et al., 2007; Rogers, 2011; Zetlin et al., 2010). They also present with poor social skills and more aggression and impulsivity (Zetlin et al., 2010). YPIC frequently present with learning difficulties, which may have their origins in CDT and have been exacerbated by frequent changes in placement and school (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006). Unfortunately, the educational system is not equipped to recognize and support children and YP with such challenges, and as a result their challenges may go unaddressed, or addressed inappropriately (Berridge, 2012; Zetlin et al., 2010). YPIC may be further disadvantaged with regard to their education in that caregivers often have low expectation of their charges, both with regard to their academic performance and attendance at school (Cashmore et al., 2007). Many YP exit the system without completing their high school education. Only one quarter of YPIC in England achieve adequate General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results, compared to three quarters of all pupils, and CLs rarely go on to tertiary education (Berridge, 2012; Betz, 2010; Martin & Jackson, 2002; Wade & Dixon, 2006).

The South African picture in respect of educational levels among the general population of YP between the ages of 15 and 25 is poor; a substantial proportion (53%) of this age group does not have a grade 12 level of education (Statistics South Africa, 2015). The (much smaller) sample of CLs in Dickens’ (2016) study reflected a similar trend, with 12 of the CLs having educational levels of grade 10 and below, and seven of the participants having a grade 12 certificate. Perhaps not surprisingly the largest increase in unemployment figures between 2008 and 2015 was among individuals who had not completed their secondary education, which makes the educational profile of unemployed YP who are looking for work concerning (Statistics South Africa, 2015).
These challenges have far reaching consequences for CLs as they attempt to enter the adult world. The decline in the youth labour market has resulted in the positions available to YP without educational credentials being temporary, part time and poorly paid in nature, which effectively traps CLs in the cycle of poverty (Cashmore et al., 2007; Henig, 2009; Statistics South Africa, 2015). Rates of unemployment among CLs are high, and those who are employed, in general, are employed in minimum wage capacities with little or no prospect of developing a career path (Cashmore et al., 2007; Tweddle, 2007; Wade & Dixon, 2006). South African figures reflect that low wage employment is highest in YP between the ages of 15-24, which would include CLs, and is concentrated in fields such as retail, wholesale, agriculture or construction (Statistics South Africa, 2015). These kinds of jobs provide limited opportunities for progression to higher paid employment. Further, the cost of living has outpaced the capacity of the minimum wage to provide adequately for a person’s basic needs such as adequate housing and nutrition and health insurance, putting CLs at risk of living in poverty (Dworsky & Courtney, 2009; Stott, 2013).

2.4.2. Employment outcomes for CLs

The literature suggests that CLs are unprepared to find employment (Henig, 2009). Stott (2013) maintains that the most vulnerable are those YP with no high school diploma, who have lived in the structured environment of a CYCC, and who have no work experience to draw on. These YP lack the social capital, emotional development and social skills for successful job interviews (Stott, 2013). In addition, CLs frequently find themselves in debt, having no practical experience of money management, or knowledge of the responsibilities attendant to being a wage earner and tenant (Höjer & Sjöblom, 2009).

Securing employment is widely recognised as a major challenge facing CLs and some programmes have been implemented in an attempt to address this problem (Henig, 2009). Unfortunately, unemployment preparation programmes, where they exist, may contribute to maintaining the cycle of poverty, as the focus is on finding immediate employment rather than developing a career path (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006; Henig, 2009; Miller & Porter, 2007). In situations where support is provided for CLs to further their education while working or claiming benefits, many CLs find it difficult to engage with programmes due to financial, emotional or social difficulties (Unrau, Font, & Rawls, 2012). Wade and Dixon (2006) assert that many CLs lack core qualities for securing well paid employment, such as confidence, skills and qualifications, a position that is echoed by Stott (2013), and argue for the implementation of targeted career interventions before YP exit the system. Given that where employment/educational programmes exist for YP who have exited the care system there is a high dropout rate, developing confidence, qualifications and skills before YP are discharged would seem to be a necessity.
A further challenge to South African youth is the capital outlay that accompanies job-seeking (DPRU & CDSA, 2016). The payment of the Child Support Grant (CSG) ends when YP turn 18 (Patel, Graham, Baldry, & Mgehe, 2016). Young job seekers incur considerable expenses related to internet access, copying and printing, certification of documents and postage, as many employers require hardcopy submission of documents (DPRU & CDSA, 2016; Patel et al., 2016). Many YP have no option but to borrow money from family or friends, which results in tension and difficult relationships when the money is not repaid (DPRU & CDSA, 2016). This may be exacerbated in the case of CLs, as they have no history of ‘contribution’ to the family income by way of the CSG, which would have been withdrawn when they were placed in care. Families may resent the return of a CL who requires money to look for work.

However, lack of education and finance are not the only barriers to CLs securing employment. Miller and Porter (2007) note that young women are further disadvantaged by having children, and that dropping out of high school and a lack of high school education are more significant obstacles for young women than for men. Young men are not as disadvantaged if they have children or a lack of education, but find it difficult to secure employment if they have had any involvement with the criminal justice system (Miller & Porter, 2007).

2.4.3. Housing outcomes for CLs

The ability to earn an adequate living wage directly impacts on CLs’ security in terms of securing a home, and equally, securing stable housing is a necessary platform for securing employment (Berzin, Rhodes, & Curtis, 2011). Housing is also recognised as a critical area for CLs, and the lack of safe, decent, affordable accommodation has the potential to overturn all the other developmental tasks of adulthood. The failure to secure stable accommodation is the forerunner of a range of hardships for CLs that impacts on their success in transitioning out of the care system (Stott, 2013; Wade & Dixon, 2006).

Natalier and Johnson (2012) assert that the living situations of CLs are varied and show a lack of stability and multiple moves. Some leave the statutory system and return to their families. However, these arrangements are usually short lived and not without problems, as the families from which YP were removed remain troubled at best or dysfunctional at worst (Park, Metraux, Brodbar, & Culhane, 2004). CLs report that their relationships with their families are usually characterized by conflict, and they experience their families as unsupportive (Berzin et al., 2011; Höjer & Sjöblom, 2009). When YP move on from their parents homes in these circumstances, it is unlikely that they will return home, in contrast to their non-cared for peers. However, the situations to which they move are rarely satisfactory. Frequently YP move to unsatisfactory housing in unsafe neighbourhoods. They are often
sharing with a friend, not from choice but because they have no other option, and fiercely resent the lack of privacy and loss of control this entails (Natalier & Johnson, 2012).

For most YP housing transitions are characterised by ongoing stress and instability, which is exacerbated by various factors. In general, CLs are setting up home independently at a much earlier age than their non-cared for peers (Simon, 2008). In the absence of supportive family relationships their social networks are usually with other marginalized youth which adds to their risk factors (Natalier & Johnson, 2012). In an attempt to avoid ‘sleeping rough’, many CLs go through periods of ‘couch surfing’ with friends or family members, who might accommodate them for short periods. Such arrangements are included in the definition of homelessness found in Simon (2008). Sadly, CLs are over represented in the homeless population, and a significant number make use of shelters and emergency accommodation in the absence of a place to call their own (Park et al., 2004; Simon, 2008).

The cost of rented properties has, in recent years, increased enormously due to housing shortages and economic factors. CLs frequently lack the skills, knowledge and assistance to enter and navigate this competitive market and few receive concrete assistance in this regard (Berzin et al., 2011). CLs experience significant difficulties firstly saving for deposits, and secondly securing accommodation because they lack a credit history and because their residential history shows patterns of instability (Berzin et al., 2011).

The South African picture in respect of housing for YP has improved somewhat in recent years (Statistics South Africa, 2016b). The most recent report states that the number of YP living in formal housing has increased to 81%, while the numbers of YP living in traditional and informal housing has decreased to 8.9% and 9.6% respectively (Statistics South Africa, 2016b). Statistics South Africa (2016b) also reports that the number of YP living in overcrowded homes has decreased. With regard to the accommodation of CLs, Dickens (2016) reports that two thirds of the CLs who participated in her study were dependant on others to pay for their accommodation. The accommodation arrangements were fairly stable as participants did not report any moves, but only one third of the CLs were self-supporting in terms of their accommodation. The high cost of living and rent is cited as the reason for CLs depending on others for assistance with accommodation (Dickens, 2016).

For many CLs the move out of the care system is regarded with mixed feelings. The freedom of being out of the structured environment of the CYCC is enticing, but many find the experience of living alone overwhelming, and report that they lack the practical skills (budgeting, shopping, cooking) necessary for independent living (Höjer & Sjöblom, 2009; Simon, 2008). Some are fortunate to have institutional support in the shape of rooms or flats provided by social services, and assistance with
the practicalities of daily living for a period following discharge from the system (Simon, 2008). But these services are not universal, and the worries concerning finding a residence and how to meet rent and living expenses are known to be contributors to depression and substance abuse among the care leaving population (Berzin et al., 2011; Cashmore et al., 2007).

The documented outcomes associated with care leaving are predominantly negative, however, these have not gone unremarked and unaddressed. Utilizing research conducted with CLs that has highlighted the areas in which CLs felt they preparation and support, a number of Independent Living Programmes have emerged. These programmes are implemented in the period prior to the YP leaving the care system, and thus are relevant to this study as their focus in on preparation for leaving care.

2.5. Independent Living Programmes (ILPs)

In an effort to improve the outcomes for CLs, a number of Independent Living Programmes (ILPs) have been developed and implemented in recent years (Montgomery, Donkoh, & Underhill, 2006; Ringle, Ingram, Newman, Thompson, & Waite, 2007; Vacca, 2008). ILPs are varied in their approach, but similar in focus as they attend to areas where CLs are known to struggle (Greeson, Garcia, Kim, & Courtney, 2015). According to Lemon, Hines, and Merdinger (2005), CLs who have experienced ILPs have better success in transitioning from care. ILPs fall into three broad categories of approach: programmes that focus on teaching life skills in a group or classroom setting, programmes that provide independent living practice under supervision, and programmes that incorporate life and relationship based skills.

Findings from follow up studies of CLs indicated that CLs felt they lacked competence in five critical areas: securing accommodation, budgeting and money management, job seeking and job skills training, career planning and parenting skills (Lemon et al., 2005; Mares, 2010).

According to Greeson et al. (2015), most ILPs take the form of group based sessions where life skills are ‘taught’ in a classroom type setting. Ringle et al. (2007) describe activities such as workbooks that encourage YPIC to identify their career aspirations, evaluate them realistically in terms of their abilities and academic performance and consider alternatives. Also included are examples of real world situations that encourage CLs to consider practical issues of living, such as budgeting, banking, and finding accommodation (Ringle et al., 2007).

However, these kinds of skills should preferably be embedded in experiential learning, such as having a weekend job, which not only facilitates the development of financial skills, but contributes to YPs’ experience of the world of work, starts to build a C.V., builds social capital and contributes in multiple ways to the development of resilience (Maclean, 2004). Montgomery et al. (2006, p. 1437) refer to
ILPs that provide “supervised living spaces in which young people can practice their acquired skills”. Settings for such ILPs are varied and include community centres, independent tenancies and supervised practice placements (Montgomery et al., 2006). Frimpong-Manso (2012) describes a similar process followed by an SOS children’s village in Ghana. Youth are transferred to homes in nearby communities which serve as “halfway houses” (Frimpong-Manso, 2012, p. 345). Under the supervision of a youth leader YP prepare for their transition from care, running their household and managing the budget and practicing the life skills they learned while in the SOS village (Frimpong-Manso, 2012). Similarly, Kroner and Mares (2009) describe the Lighthouse Independent Living Programme, a housing based ILP, which provides a supervised housing programme to YP about to leave care. Prior to their placement in independent housing, YP have taken part in a life skills training course, which continues throughout their stay in the programme (Kroner & Mares, 2009, 2011). YP are provided with accommodation and a basic living allowance, which they may supplement by finding employment. The placements are carefully considered, and YP are placed in areas with which they are familiar, and are situated close to bus routes (Kroner & Mares, 2009).

Munson and Scott (2007) and Greeson et al. (2015) comment that ILP programmes alone are insufficient to assist CLs to make the transition from a CYCC to adulthood. Munson and Scott (2007) argue that life skills also includes creating connections and supportive relationships with others, and that these connections and relationships are instrumental in assisting YP as they journey towards independence. The importance of combining practical life skills with relational skills and resources in the form of role models and mentors is stressed throughout the literature, and the importance of social connections is discussed in section 2.8.2 of this chapter (Greeson et al., 2015; Mendes, Johnson, & Moslehuddin, 2011).

The value of ILPs is debated in the literature. Ringle et al. (2007) identified similarities between YP who had competed an IPL and those who had not, in positive areas such as living environment. However YP who had competed the programme reported more positive outcomes in terms of risky behaviours and employment than their peers who did not complete the programme (Ringle et al., 2007). In contrast, Lee and Berrick (2014) argue that the efficacy of ILPs is unclear, and that adequate preparation and stable transitions require more than various life skills, a position that is supported by Greeson et al. (2015). Kroner and Mares (2011, p. 569) comment that the programmes they evaluated showed “both accomplishment and room for improvement”. One area of improvement may be the inclusion of after-care support as part of the ILP package. Jones (2014a) and Ringle et al. (2007) argue that a combination of preparation during care and after-care support may contribute to more holistic support for CLs, but it is evident that that more research is needed to establish what kind of services may be of benefit to CLs and under what conditions (Jones, 2014a; Ringle et al., 2007).
Some features of successful preparation for leaving care are identified in the literature. Mendes and Moslehuddin (2006) observe that care-leaving is associated with better outcomes when there is a significant transition period, and when YP are involved in the planning process. IPLs should be able to cater for YP with varying degrees of vulnerability, and address the concerns of YP with special needs (Mendes et al., 2011). According to Stein and Wade (2000) successful programmes identify the core needs of CLs in different ways, engage and involve YP in decisions that are important to them, work with other agencies to address needs of CLs and influence policy at local level by raising awareness, engaging in debate and informing policy response to care leaving. Mendes and Moslehuddin (2006) detail what preparation programmes should ideally offer, and their suggestions encompass services while in care as well as provision of after-care support.

However, the feasibility of ILPs, of any description, in the South African context where residential care is inadequately funded and under resourced, care leaving services are optional, and CLs are completely marginalized is questionable (Bond, 2015). The evolution of care-leaving legislation, policy and programmes in the international arena developed in response to the continued poor outcomes for CLs. Although South Africa has adopted a developmental approach to welfare, and best interest of the child stance in current legislation, the reality is that the country lags far behind the international field in respect of legislation, policy and service provision to YPIC and CLs (RSA, 1997, 2005). It may be argued that this constitutes a failure of the state to assume its role as corporate parent and represents an issue of social justice.

2.6. The care leaving debate and policy development

The provision of services to CLs varies considerably from country to country, and even within a country where different states have their own autonomy in respect of policy making (for example the USA and Australia). However, internationally, care leaving policy has undergone considerable evolution following the recognition of the poor outcomes associated with care leaving. The following sections discuss the international and South African policies and legislation, and close by presenting an argument that care leaving policy and legislation are matters of social justice.

2.6.1. International perspectives

The care leaving debate began in the 1970s and 1980s in the United Kingdom and United States of America respectively, and somewhat later in Australia (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006; Stein & Wade, 2000). The dismal outcomes associated with care leaving have prompted attention from researchers that has brought about policy change in recent years, principally in the USA, UK and Australia, although the extent and pace of implementation and growth has been variable (Dixon,
2008; Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006; Stanley, 2007). In the global context the 2009 United Nations committee on the Rights of the Child produced a formal benchmarking of global expectations with regard to CLs (Coyle & Pinkerton, 2012)

In the United Kingdom, the Children Act 1989 was instrumental in bringing about the development and expansion of care leaving services. Local care authorities were expected to provide services related to preparation for life after care, advice and support, accommodation and financial assistance, and make provision for representation and complaints (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006; Wade & Munro, 2008). The discretionary aspects of the Act led to variance in what supports were available to CLs, and many local authorities lacked formal care leaving policies, but overall there were successes and improvements in the lives of CLs (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006).

The focus of the Labour government, elected in 1997, was social exclusion, which underpinned the Leaving Care Act 2000. This act significantly extended the responsibilities and powers of the Children Act 1987. Local authorities are obliged to assess a comprehensive array of care leaving needs, housing, health, education, financial support and independent living skills of all YPIC, and to develop an individualized Pathway Plan to address those needs (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006; Wade & Munro, 2008). Further, local authorities must provide CLs with a personal advisor who coordinates the services required to meet the goals of the Pathway Plan, and this service should continue until the care leaver is 21 years of age (Office of the Children's Rights Director, 2012). Housing and educational support is also mandated, including accommodation needs for vacation periods for CLs in higher education. These requirements have brought about positive change in the areas of education, training and employment, although Mendes and Moslehuddin (2006) maintain that gaps still exist with regard to the provision of health services. However, it seems that some improvements have been made in this regard, as the Ofsted report (2009), describes a number of positive outcomes in terms of health and accessing health services by CLs. According to Mendes and Moslehuddin (2004) a further legislative improvement is found in the Homeless Act, 2002, which for the first time makes specific mention of services for youth at risk and stating that CLs must be given priority.

In the United States of America care leaving policy development has taken place in four distinct waves. In 1986 the Independent Living (IPL) initiative provided states with funding for IPL preparation for teenagers in the care system. Previously basic outreach and training in daily living skills programmes had been provided, as well as assistance with education and employment, counselling and written transition plans (Courtney, 2008; Stott, 2013). The IPL initiative represented a step forward as it allowed states access to funding for IPLs for the first time (Stott, 2013). In 1988 the IPL was amended; funding was increased, services were provided to all CLs regardless of
eligibility and follow up services were mandated for six months after discharge (Collins, 2004; Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2004).

The Foster Care Independence Act, 1999 (Civic Impulse, 2017), expanded not only the amount of funding available for IPLs, but also allowed states to use the funds to provide room and board for YP between the ages of 18 and 21 who had aged out of the system. Children under the age of 16 were included in IPL programmes and Medicaid cover was provided to YP who emancipated from the care system until the age of 21 (Stott, 2013). This policy was revised in 2002 and funds were made available for tertiary education and training for former cared for youth up to the age of 23. However, before they could access state funds, YP had to show that they had exhausted all other sources of funding. Höjer and Sjöblom (2009) found CLs to be unprepared and ill-equipped to navigate bureaucratic labyrinths, and that they found completing forms particularly challenging. This suggests that young people may be missing out on accessing resources when faced with bureaucratic processes in the absence of assistance from an invested adult.

Collins (2004) and Stott (2013) make reference to the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments of 2001, which increased the provision of resources by making vouchers available for post-secondary education and training for qualifying young people over the age of 18. The vouchers are available to young people up to the age of 23 years, provided that they were in an educational programme at the age of 21 years, and conditional on their having exhausted all other sources of funding.

In 2008 the legislation was revised again to make provision for YP adopted or in legal guardianship to access IPL’s and for financial assistance for YP over the age of 18. CLs were to have individualized transition plans in place within 90 days of their 18th birthday, and these plans were to include resources over key areas such as housing, employment and health care. However, English et al. (2003) maintain that the provisions in the Foster Care Act are insufficient to meet the needs CLs, and suggest that additional finance and public, non-insurance health programmes are required to complement the cover provided by Medicaid.

The Australian response to the care leaving dilemma was slower to gather momentum. Leaving care as an issue first came to public attention in 1989 after an inquiry into homeless children revealed that many had previously been in residential care (Cashmore & Mendes, 2008). Subsequent campaigns were driven primarily by child welfare coalitions, but the response was slow and fragmented in application, as different states had their own policies and focus (Cashmore & Mendes, 2008; Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2004). This situation remains largely unchanged and the differing levels of service are clearly illustrated in the Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous
Affairs (2010) document. Common policy features include recognition that planning for discharge should begin at 15 years of age, at least 12 months prior to the planned discharge date. Support services are provided in three phases; firstly a preparation phase while YP are still in the care system, secondly a phased, supported transition out of the care system, and thirdly, after care independence services providing tailored support beyond the age of 18. All states offer post discharge support, but the ages to which the support continues varies from 18 to 25. Most states provide some level of support to age 25, but many of the services are subject to eligibility conditions. A once off transition to independent living allowance of $1000 is available to all young people leaving care. Homelessness as a problem among CLs is recognized and additional support for this population of vulnerable people is specifically mentioned (Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2010).

A common observation across the literature from all three of the countries reviewed here is that service provision is not guaranteed, and varies widely between local authorities, states or territories (Carr, 2014; Cashmore & Mendes, 2008; Collins, 2004; Courtney, 2008; Wade & Munro, 2008). Although the progression of legislation has served to improve service provision, increase available funds and expand the use of funding, resources for CLs remain constrained (Collins, 2004). Collins (2004) notes that given the limited resources available it is unlikely that all eligible young people are receiving services or benefits. The allocation of available resources is managed by front line workers whom Collins (2004) observes are in a position to act as gatekeepers. Young people who are engaged, mature and interested may be more likely to receive benefits or services, but are also likely to be the least vulnerable of vulnerable population (Collins, 2004).

2.6.2. South African care leaving literature

An EBSCO search using the terms ‘care leaving, South Africa’, ‘child and youth care, South Africa’, ‘residential care, South Africa’, ‘children’s homes, South Africa’ yielded few results relevant to this study. Many of the results focussed on the health/medical/nursing aspects of ‘care’. A small body of literature was found relevant to the statutory care of children and young people in South Africa, but some was dated (Muller & Steyn, 1990a; Muller & Steyn, 1990b), and the current literature concentrated largely on the impact of HIV/AIDS and Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in care (Nestadt et al., 2013; Okello, 2005).

Department of Social Development (2013) figures show that 13,987 children were living in 256 children’s homes, registered with, or run by, the Department of Social Development. These figures do not include children living in non-registered facilities, temporary places of safety or partial care facilities. This is a sizeable number of futures likely to be impacted by the negative outcomes
associated with being in care, and for CLs. Yet in South Africa, the care leaving debate has only recently surfaced as an area of academic interest among a small group of individuals. Consequently, there is little literature to review (Tanur, 2012). Two organizations appear to be the primary driving forces in the generation of care leaving literature in South Africa: Girls and Boys Town in partnership with the University of Johannesburg (Dickens, 2016; Muller & Steyn, 1990a; van Breda, 2015; van Breda, Marx, & Kader, 2012) and Mamelani Projects (Tanur, 2012).

The experience and outcomes for CLs in South Africa reflects that of their contemporaries in other countries. The process of leaving care is abrupt and characterised by little, or no, preparation, and CLs experience high levels of anxiety and uncertainty with regard to housing and employment (Bond, 2010; Tanur, 2012). CLs in South Africa show similar outcomes in terms of mental and physical health problems, homelessness, juvenile crime, prostitution, low educational attainment and inadequate social support systems (Bond, 2010; Tanur, 2012). However, Tanur (2012) identifies a number of additional challenges, endemic to South Africa, faced by YP, which compound the problems experienced by CLs.

Low socio-economic conditions prevail in South Africa, and YP are often expected to provide, not only for themselves, but for their extended families as well. This is in an economic climate that has resulted in unemployment among youth being as high as 78% (National Youth Development Agency, 2011b). Housing also presents a significant challenge as considerable backlogs exist in the construction of Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing, and many people, from necessity, live in shacks (Hall, 2014b). For many HIV is a further challenge; the infection rate among YP is high, many YP are placed in care because one or both parents have died from AIDS related illnesses, and it is estimated that a third of YP between the ages of 15 and 34 live in youth headed households (Tanur, 2012). YP between the ages of 14 and 25 make up 35.4% of the prison population, and there is a high rate of recidivism, particularly among male offenders. The communities in which many YP live are characterised by alcohol and substance abuse, violence and gang activity (Tanur, 2012).

The Girls and Boys Town (GBT) study looked at the experiences of a small group of young men who exited the care system 5 years previously, with particular reference to the social processes used by this group of CLs (van Breda, 2015). The resultant findings informed an emerging theory of care leaving that sheds light on how YP engage with the world as they journey towards adulthood. The results of this study have the potential to inform child and youth care practice, and to that end, GBT has embarked on a longitudinal study that will track GBT CLs from the time they exit the system into
young adulthood. The emphasis of the research is resilience, outcomes and nascent theory (van Breda, 2015).

2.6.3. South African legislation and policy

The development of South African legislation follows a similar trajectory to the international arena but began much later. In 1995 the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on young people at risk was formed and tasked with developing a policy framework aimed at transforming the child and youth care system (Department of Social Development, 2010). Their findings mirrored those that prompted developments in care legislation in other countries, and the recommendations, published in 1996, formed the basis of the section on residential care found in the 1997 White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 2010).

The Child Care Act (RSA, 1984) set out the requirements for registering and monitoring a child and youth care centre, but made no stipulations with regard to service provision. The 1998 amendments established minimum norms and standards, stipulated that children of school going age must be enrolled at school or an appropriate alternative programme, and included behaviour management strategies. Overall, there was an emphasis on care and protection which had previously been lacking (Department of Social Development, 2010).

The Children’s Act (RSA, 2005) saw a considerable shift in emphasis and developments in service provision. Arguably the most significant development was the emphasis on the rights of the child. The Children’s Act (RSA, 2005) detailed the types of programmes that could be offered and the conditions under which a child and youth care centre must operate. In addition provincial departments were empowered to regulate the establishment and development of child and youth care centres and provision was made for quality assurance checks (Department of Social Development, 2010).

Although the South African legislation shows major shifts from pathology to systems and development, institutions to differentiated child and youth care centres, fragmented to integrated programmes and holistic service provision to each child and family, many of the services are discretionary (Department of Social Development, 2010). Optional services are those that address social functioning issues such as substance abuse, treatment of psychiatric disorders and therapeutic and developmental programmes (RSA, 2005). The problems and challenges that face children and young people in care have been discussed earlier in this review, it seems unfortunate that services designed to improve social functioning are regarded as optional (Bond, 2010; Carr, 2014).

The implementation of the Children’s Amendment Act (RSA, 2007) represented a considerable step forward as it contained details of a range of services that could be provided to children and young
people in care including transitional services to CLs. The Children’s Amendment Act, section 191(3)(e) contains the following paragraph concerning transitional services to CLs:

“A Child and Youth Care Centre may in addition to its residential care programmes offer a programme to assist a person with the transition when leaving a Child and Youth Care Centre after reaching the age of 18”

The use of the word “may” is significant, as it serves to make the above a suggestion, rather than an instruction, thus care leaving and aftercare services become discretionary. CYCCs are vastly underfunded and resourced, and for many it is a challenge simply to provide basic services and necessities for the YP in their care (Loffell, 2007). Transition services and aftercare support are frequently minimal or non-existent (Bond, 2010; Tanur, 2012). The emphasis of the Children’s Amendment Act (RSA, 2007) and the Norms, Standards and Practice Guidelines for the Children’s Act (Department of Social Development, 2010) is on children and young people in care. In the absence of legislation that makes transition services a requirement, and clear, direct policies that provide direction and funding, transitional services continue to fall by the wayside.

Currently young people in care have the option of remaining in care until the age of 21, in order to complete or continue their education or training (RSA, 2007, 2015). If YP choose to remain in care they should continue to receive social assistance; either a foster care grant or subsidy for the child and youth care centre (Department of Social Development, 2010). As they prepare to exit the system young people are supposed to be involved in an individualized planning process and to be linked with an external social worker who will provide follow up services (Department of Social Development, 2010). However, the reality is that for many young people there is no involvement, little planning which is of limited value, and no follow up services (Bond, 2010; Gaskell, 2010; Mendes et al., 2011). Further, in contrast to care leaving in other countries, no financial support is available for CLs in South Africa.

If legislation is minimal and not directive, policy is, currently, completely absent. Consultation with various colleagues in the statutory field, CYC’s and Department of Social Development (DSD) yielded no concrete policy documents, either at organizational or institutional levels. Tanur’s (2012) research clearly indicates that preparation and aftercare support services are critical to the success of YP transitioning out of care, and the programme for CLs developed by Mamelani, in conjunction with the findings from GBT research, could form the basis for care leaving policy.

The question that arises from this discussion is why is residential care, the children and young people in CYCCs and the services associated with residential care, apparently so marginalized at legislative
and policy levels? The answer to this question is multifaceted. Children and young people represent 18.6 million of the population in South Africa (Hall, Mentjies, & Sambu, 2014). As previously stated, figures show 13,987 children in residential care across South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2013). When considered as a percentage of a total population of children in South Africa, and when compared with 550,000 children in foster care, the challenges of such a small group of individuals may well be regarded as less of a priority (Department of Social Development, 2013; Financial and Fiscal Commission, 2013). However, foster care is also the most common form of placement in other parts of the world, yet a more comprehensive range of services is in place for young people who exit residential care (Wade & Munro, 2008).

Vulnerability is another factor that might influence the lack of attention to care leaving. The level of vulnerability of children in South Africa is staggering, and the range of challenges and risks to children and young people overwhelming. In addition to the problems already discussed in this review such as poverty, HIV, orphanhood, child headed households, malnutrition, and abuse, children and young people are also at risk of ill health, are exposed to inadequate health care and education services, and are vulnerable to trafficking in persons, exploitation by relatives and sexual exploitation at home and in the wider community, to name but a few of many vulnerabilities (Cluver, Meinck, & Omar, 2014; Hall, 2014a, 2014c; Jewkes et al., 2006; Lutya, 2009, 2010; Matthews & Benvenuti, 2014; Nannan, Hall, & Sambu, 2014; Nduna & Jewkes, 2010, 2012; Nestadt et al., 2013).

A further dimension may be found in the overarching principle of the Children’s Act (RSA, 2005), which holds that children are best placed within families and communities. This principle is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the South African constitution (RSA, 1996b), both of which preference family placements for children removed from parental care. Consequently, service provision and resources have focussed on kinship or community foster placements, and adoption.

However, it is possible to argue that in marginalizing the needs of an admittedly comparatively small number of individuals, the state is neglecting its responsibilities as a corporate parent, and the poor outcomes experienced by CLs become issues of social justice that have economic ramifications (Mendes, Pinkerton, & Munro, 2014). Removing children from parental care is an invasive act which, according to Mendes, Pinkerton, et al. (2014), should only be undertaken if the state recognizes it has a legal and moral obligation to ensure that the outcomes for such children are better than if they had remained with their families, and to guarantee that sufficient resources are available to promote good outcomes. Bradbury (2006) concurs, stating that if a local authority has taken steps to remove a child from his or her family it has accepted the responsibility for safeguarding and promoting their welfare
and future, as would any good parent. Thus, corporate parenting requires that the state assumes the role and responsibilities of a reasonable parent in terms of investment of time, resources and emotional commitment (Bradbury, 2006). Failure to do so becomes an issue of social justice, as young people leaving care are ill equipped to cope with independent living and are thus denied equal economic and social rights (National Association of Social Workers, 2015).

Social justice is the moral foundation of good governance (Abel & Austin, 2014; Powers & Faden, 2006) A sense of social justice is essential for public administrators as their positions not only invest them with an obligation to affect public policy, but to make value laden decisions that enable people to live fulfilling lives, to be able to sustain themselves economically, and to be active contributors to their society (Abel & Austin, 2014). Human well-being and the common good are overarching concerns of social justice and are the principles employed when policy makers and public administrators make determinations about the allocation and distribution of resources (Abel & Austin, 2014; Horn, 2013). Issues relevant to social justice are societal inequalities, unfair social structures and policies that limit the availability of resources because of group or individual characteristics (Lerner, 2015).

It is possible to argue that the absence of policy, and the generalized nature of current legislation pertinent to CLs abjures the principles of human well-being and common good. In their theory of social justice, Powers and Faden (2006) identify six essential components to human well-being that are required to constitute human flourishing. They are distinct but not discrete, and are of central importance to everyone. If one is missing or deficient a person’s life is lacking in well-being (Horn, 2013; Powers & Faden, 2006). The six components are health, personal security, reasoning, respect, attachment and self-determination. The poor outcomes associated with care leaving traverse all of the domains discussed by Powers and Faden (2006), as CLs not only suffer from physical and mental health issues, but are often unable to access adequate health care, are overly represented in the homeless population and criminal justice system, suffer with unaddressed educational and developmental delays, are frequently trapped in the cycle of poverty, have difficulty with relationships and are seldom in a position to influence decisions that are made about their lives (Ajdukovic & Franz, 2005; Akister et al., 2010; Brown & Wilderson, 2010; Cameron, 2007; Cashmore & Paxman, 2006; Courtney & Dworsky, 2006; Dworsky & Courtney, 2006).

In failing to address the social justice component of human well-being, the other component of social justice, the common good, is also being neglected. The poor outcomes among CLs documented in the literature reflect that this population of citizens use a substantial portion of resources and represent a drain on already overburdened services, such as welfare, prisons and health services, and that they
engage with various services lifelong (Malia et al., 2008; Stein, 2006). As an economic issue this is significant as one care leaver, who is unemployable and who has two children will cost the state R155, 520 in child support grants, from birth to age 18. If the children are removed and placed in foster care the cost to state will be R341, 760 over a 16 year period If the children are removed and placed in a CYCC the cost to the state will be R652, 800 in subsidy costs over the same period (Mrs C Williams, 6 March 2017). This figure does not include hidden costs such as waived school fees, clothing and food parcel support. The net result is that services are then unavailable or less available to other citizens who need them, thus detracting from the common good.

Social justice poses the question which inequalities matter the most in a particular context, and it would seem from the lack of focus on residential care and CLs, that the inequalities of children and young people in foster care matter the most (Horn, 2013; Powers & Faden, 2006). Socio-cultural practices and norms impact on social justice as they are influential in policy and distribution of resources (Horn, 2013). The social and cultural practice of kinship care is a factor that has clearly influenced policy and practice, and which has been endorsed by political structures in the form of the White Paper for Welfare, and the Children’s Act, both of which preference family and kinship placements, either as foster care or adoption as the most appropriate and cost effective means of permanency planning for children and young people in need of care and protection (RSA, 1997, 2005). However, this focus serves to disadvantage children and young people who are not placed within a family setting. Young people placed in stable kinship or community foster care, or who are adopted, might reasonably expect to receive ongoing support as they transition to independent adulthood, whereas CLs can rarely extend their stay, and have little, if any, skills and support systems to sustain and assist them as they attempt to transition to adulthood (Mendes, Pinkerton, et al., 2014). Wade and Munro (2008) suggest that a strategy to address the problems associated with care leaving would be the gradual development of care leaving services. It is disheartening to realize that in almost twenty years the statement “appropriate strategies are needed to support young adults over the age of 18 who have been discharged from children’s homes” (RSA, 1997(49)(h)) has only developed as far as non-specified services that “may” be provided (RSA, 2007(191)(3)(e)).

According to Abel and Austin (2014) public administration should evaluate the social value of the service it provides. Social justice is understood as a “remedial process” (Horn, 2013, p. 5) requiring ongoing monitoring of ground level circumstances to ensure that allocation of resources can be adjusted appropriately to continually respond to the question, “which inequalities matter most in this situation?” It is possible to argue that in the light of the poor outcomes associated with care leaving, the absence of clear and direct policy and legislation that mandates comprehensive service packages to CLs constitutes a failure to monitor and evaluate the social value of service provision to children.
and young people in care. The continued poor outcomes, and consequent drain on other resources represents a failure of government in its moral obligation to uphold the good of all its citizens.

This section of the literature review has examined and discussed the development of legislation and policy in the United Kingdom, United States, Australia and South Africa. A critical discussion of the apparent marginalization of residential care in South Africa has been presented, arguing that the minimal legislation and services relevant to CLs represents a failing in the state’s role as corporate parent, and is a social justice issue. The next section of this review will move on to discuss the theory and concepts of resilience.

2.7. Resilience

The concept of resilience originated in the physical sciences and referred to the property of a material or ecosystem to recover from stress and return to its previous state (Ungar, 2012). The term ‘resilience’ has been adopted in the social sciences and has undergone considerable development and change since its early beginnings. Opening with a brief overview of the evolution of resilience theory, this section of the chapter moves on to discuss the four waves of development in resilience theory, followed by a discussion of resilience as an outcome or process, and the risk and protective factors that contribute to the development of resilience. Resilience across the lifespan is discussed and the critiques of resilience theory are presented. The section concludes with a discussion of the social ecology of resilience theory.

2.7.1. The evolution of resilience theory

The study of resilience enjoys a “long and illustrious history” (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000, p. 543) and is found in early accounts of disciplines such as medicine, psychology and education (Masten, 2007). Early understandings of resilience assumed it to be an inherent personality trait. Resilient children were understood to possess extraordinary strength, and were referred to as ‘invincible’ or ‘invulnerable’ (Masten, 2001; Moe, Johnson, & Wade, 2007). Resilience emerged as a dedicated field of study in the 1950s as a result of dissatisfaction with the deficit based models of theory and intervention that predominated at that time (McElwee, 2007). The past 30 to 40 years have seen a significant increase in the study of resilience, with the work of Norman Garmezy at the forefront of the field (Kolar, 2011; Masten, 2007; Rutter, 1999).

Garmezy (1971, 1991) is credited with developing resilience research and pioneering the shift in emphasis away from psychopathology, poverty and traumatic stress towards a focus on positive adaptation (Kolar, 2011; Masten et al., 1999; Rutter, 2012). He observed that not all children facing disadvantage displayed the anticipated behavioural challenges that were associated with their risk
status (Condly, 2006). Noting that some children remained competent in spite of their difficult situations led to the study of resilience and growth under adverse circumstances (Kolar, 2011). In subsequent decades the field of resilience research has continued to expand, and Masten (2007) identifies four waves of resilience research which are discussed in section 2.7.2 below.

2.7.2. Four waves of resilience research

The first wave of research saw a move away from the understanding of resilience as a personality trait or quality of invulnerability, toward a broader conceptualization. Researchers began using more qualified and dynamic terms such as stress resistance and resilience (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Wright et al., 2013). This development was significant as it represented the beginning of a deeper understanding of the dynamic interplay of risk and resilience factors over time, and that these factors involved individuals, families and wider sociocultural factors (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Wright et al., 2013).

Garmezy’s (1971) work falls into the first wave of study, which focussed on defining and operationalizing concepts, as well as their measurements, in order to establish a foundation of descriptive data (Kolar, 2011; Masten, 2011). This area of research drew attention to key concepts and commonly noted correlates of resilience and protective factors, which have remained consistent over time and further research (Masten, 2007, 2014; Wright et al., 2013).

The concept of resilience itself required definition, and it was from this generation of research that the generally understood definition, that refers to a pattern of relatively positive adaptation in spite of experiences of significant adversity either in the past or present, emerged (Luthar, 2006; Wright et al., 2013). Resilience is therefore a construct consisting of two distinct aspects: significant adversity and positive adaptation. Adversity is defined in terms of statistical probabilities. Luthar (2006) suggests that a high risk situation carries high odds for measured maladjustment, and adaptation is considered to be positive when it is better than expected given the circumstances experienced. This implies that in assessing resilience two distinct judgements are made: first that there has been a significant threat to the development or adaptation of the individual, and second, that in spite of this risk or threat, the functioning or adaptation of the individual is satisfactory (Wright et al., 2013). Both of these judgements require the measurement of risk and adaptation against a selected set of criteria (Wright et al., 2013). Thus, in addition to defining resilience, much of this first body of work focussed on descriptions of basic concepts, as well as methodologies and measurements of resilience phenomena (Masten, 2007; Wright et al., 2013; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Identifying risk and protective factors was an inherent aspect of the first wave of resilience study; risk and protective factors as aspects of resilience will be included as a separate discussion later in this review.
Thus, the first wave of resilience research focussed on the factors of resilience and paved the way for the emergence of the second wave of study. The second wave of study attended to the processes that underlie, and might account for, the correlates of resilience identified in the first body of literature (Khanlou & Wray, 2014; Masten, 2007). Wyman (cited in Wright et al., 2013, p. 22) defines resilience as “a diverse set of processes that alter children’s transactions with adverse life conditions to reduce negative effects and promote mastery of normative developmental tasks”. This new, broader approach to resilience examined contextual issues, dynamic models of change and the role of developmental systems (Herrmann et al., 2011). The result was a new emphasis on the roles of systems and relationships in the development of resilience. Researchers considered biological, social and cultural processes, and attempted to integrate these factors into studies and models of resilience (Wright et al., 2013; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012).

The second wave of study recognized that understanding resilience required a longitudinal approach, given the broad scope of resilience, the complexity of human lives and the lack of precision in the available concepts, measures and analytic methods (Masten, 2007). Khanlou and Wray (2014) note that this wave of study was characterized by an increasing sophistication in the models and concepts of resilience, as it included studies on the potential of attachment relationships and family interactions as resilience-enhancing factors. Also, research on psychobiological stress reactivity, and the self-regulation systems for attention, arousal, emotion and behaviour featured in the second wave of research (Masten, 2007). Wright et al. (2013) maintain that the second wave of studies were more contextualized, in that they took note of how the individual interacts with other systems at different levels and at different times over the life span, and were more careful about generalizing conclusions.

The significance of timing emerged during the third wave of study, as research indicated that there may be opportunities for change at points where systems may be more pliable, or a there may be a higher likelihood of activating a positive flow of events if interventions are timed correctly (Wright et al., 2013; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). This is of particular relevance to policy makers and practitioners, especially in the South African context where resources are limited and funding scarce. It is good practice to plan interventions so that they are implemented at a time when the recipients will gain the most benefit and the input of time and resources is maximised (Zimmerman et al., 2013).

However, the study of resilience was evolving in the context of children who were growing up in environments that increased their odds for risk and suffering (Masten, 2011). Clearly they could not wait until academia had concluded its research, thus the urgent need for prevention strategies and policies drove the third wave of resilience research into being, in spite of the incomplete nature of the preceding research (Kolar, 2011; Masten, 2011). This period was characterized by a focus on
proactive interventions that aimed at enhancing protective processes and promoting competence and wellness (Khanlou & Wray, 2014; Masten, 2007, 2011). This wave of study resulted in a change in the models for intervention, as strength based models and protection based interventions emerged and predominated the field (Weissberg, Kumpfer, & Seligman, 2003).

The fourth wave of resilience research identified by Masten and Obradovic (2006) focuses on integrating the study of resilience across a number of domains, including levels of analysis, species and across disciplines. The emergent fourth wave also reflects a growing interest in neuro and genetic sciences, which is part of larger developments in these fields, and the technologies available for studying bio-behavioural processes (Khanlou & Wray, 2014; Masten & Obradovic, 2006). The integrated nature of the fourth wave may serve to challenge some of the earlier work on resilience, particularly the understandings of adaptive functioning. Systems such as attention and stress regulation that may have developed in unhelpful ways due to early experiences were previously understood to be enduring attributes. In the light of advances in knowledge and technology these adaptive functions may prove to be ‘reprogrammable’ (Masten & Obradovic, 2006; Winkler, 2014). This is particularly encouraging when considering placement in residential care, as it implies that the negative consequences of early neglect and abuse, and subsequent placement in a CYCC may not be inevitable, and that integrating resilience based interventions that are sensitive to context and timing may contribute to ‘reprogramming’ early cognitive and behavioural patterns, leading to better post-care outcomes.

This section of the chapter has discussed the four waves of resilience research and traced the development and changes in the field of resilience literature that occurred in these four waves. The chapter now moves into a discussion of resilience concepts, examining the concept of resilience as an outcome or process, followed by a discussion of the risk and protective factors that impact on the development of resilience.

2.7.3. Resilience as an outcome or process

The study of resilience has also examined resilience as an outcome or process. Kolar (2011, p. 424) states that “one of the primary differences in operationalizing resilience centres on whether it is defined as a process or outcome”. Outcome based research focuses on resilience as the maintenance of functionality in the presence of acutely adverse, but time limited stressors (Mancini & Bonanno, 2009; Olsson, Bond, Burns, Vella-Brodrick, & Sawyer, 2003). Functionality is regarded as patterns of competent behaviour or effective functioning and is usually defined in terms of cognitive functioning, mental health, functional capacity and good social functioning (Kolar, 2011; Olsson et al., 2003). Outcome based assessments of resilience can allow for multiple sites of resilience, but is
criticized for side-lining the processes that generate outcomes in the quest to identify and measure psychological indicators of good functioning, and for a lack of consistency in defining resilience (Kolar, 2011; Wagnild & Collins, 2009).

In contrast to resilience as outcomes, resilience as process is based on the analysis of adaptive actions and interactions in the face of enduring, substantial stressors, such as poverty, parental mental illness, neglect, maltreatment and ill-health (Mancini & Bonanno, 2010; Olsson et al., 2003). Winkler (2014) makes the point that evidence based practice influenced the focus on an outcomes based approach to resilience study, and comments that there was a move away from outcomes towards an approach that sought to interrogate the processes and experiences that may not have been captured the original empirical studies. Resilience is understood as a dynamic process that occurs from an interplay of risk and protective factors (Olsson et al., 2003). Thus, process focussed study seeks to understand the mechanisms or processes that serve to alter the effects of risk, and the developmental processes used in adaptation (Olsson et al., 2003). Further, resilience is regarded as a process that unfolds over chronological and developmental time in the contexts of individual and social level factors (Mancini & Bonanno, 2010; Olsson et al., 2003).

Kolar (2011) suggests that recent research shows a preference for process based study, and argues that the recognition of the interactive nature of risk and protective factors across multiple domains and across time makes a process based approach more suitable for social science research. While this argument certainly has merit when considered in light of the criticisms of outcomes based study, it is perhaps somewhat dismissive. Processes may be regarded as the mechanisms that generate outcomes (Winkler, 2014). Mancini and Bonanno (2010) maintain that research operationalized as either an outcome or process reflects different questions being asked of different populations in the context of the duration of the stressor under study. Thus, neither conceptualization is more or less suitable or appropriate, but rather add to the holistic knowledge of a complex and diverse concept in different ways.

2.7.4. Risk and protective factors in resilience

Resilience emerges in the presence of risk that is balanced by protective factors (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Risk and protective factors may be found within and across the spheres identified in ecological theory, and may be single, multiple, chronic or cumulative in nature (Meinck et al., 2015; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Meinck et al. (2015) assert that the study of risk and protective factors is advanced in high income countries, but not as well studied in developing countries. In South Africa there are few community based studies of risk and resilience factors, and those that there are, focus primarily on sexual abuse (Meinck et al., 2015). However, it
is possible to link international literature that identifies risk and protective factors to South African studies that are not specific to resilience study, but support existing literature.

2.7.5. Risk factors

Risk factors can be divided into two broad categories: biological and environmental factors (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Biological factors include congenital defects and low birth weight. Children who are born healthy may be at risk from various environmental factors. A single risk factor may not necessarily result in a significant impact, but the presence of multiple or chronic stressors are more damaging and decrease the likelihood for a good outcome (Gewirtz & Edleson, 2007; Rutter, 1999). However, limited and controlled exposure to risk factors may serve to develop resilience. This process is referred to by Rutter (2006, p. 2) as a “steeling effect” and is included in the section that discusses risk factors.

2.7.5.1. Biological risk factors

The biological risk factors of congenital defects and low birth weight are reflected in South African studies that examine, poverty and maternal substance abuse. Although South Africa is categorized as a middle income country, it has one of the world’s highest inequalities in the distribution of societal wealth (Saloojee, De Maayer, Garenne, & Kahn, 2007). Poverty is rife in the population and consequently malnutrition rates are high (Saloojee et al., 2007). Low birth weight is directly linked to maternal nutrition and more likely in situations of poverty as there is insufficient income for good maternal nutrition during pregnancy, and infant nutrition following delivery (Yousafzai et al., 2013; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Birth weight is an indicator of foetal health and subsequent survival, development and general health, and presents risk factors across several domains (Imdad & Bhutta, 2013; Tomlinson et al., 2014). In South Africa it is estimated that approximately 12% of infants are underweight at birth (le Roux et al., 2011). Low birth weight infants have a higher risk of mortality, and those that survive the neo-natal period are more likely to have growth failure (Imdad & Bhutta, 2013). In addition, low birth weight is associated significant neuro-cognitive and socio-emotional impairments lifelong (le Roux et al., 2011; Tomlinson et al., 2014).

Congenital defects include those that result from maternal substance abuse during pregnancy (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). South Africa has one of the highest Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) rates in the world, and FAS is undoubtedly the single biggest risk factor to children in terms of consequences due to maternal substance abuse during pregnancy in South Africa (Eaton et al., 2012; May et al., 2005; Tomlinson et al., 2014). FAS infants are frequently low birth weight babies and suffer from growth deficiencies. The developmental consequences of FAS may have lifelong implications (May et al., 2005). Individuals with FAS are likely to present with a range of challenges
across multiple functional domains in terms of cognition, motor co-ordination, development of language, executive functions, social and emotional processing and behavioural difficulties (Adnams et al., 2001; Dorrie, Focker, Freunshct, & Hebebrand, 2014). Dorrie et al. (2014) maintain that FAS results in disruption and failure in many domains, and age appropriate independence is frequently not achieved, resulting in lifelong dependence on family and state resources.

2.7.5.2. Environmental risk factors

Environmental risk factors include poverty, parents’ level of cognitive functioning and education, family conflict, violence, abuse, neglect and maltreatment (Meinck et al., 2015; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Poverty as a significant challenge in South Africa has been discussed, but a definition of poverty that makes it ‘real’ is found in Meinck et al. (2015), who define poverty as going to bed hungry on three nights of the week, or not having sufficient food in the home for three days. Poverty and malnutrition go hand in hand, and many children face consequent health issues, or find that existing health problems, such as HIV, are exacerbated. (Saloojee et al., 2007). Having HIV or Aids, or living with a caregiver who has HIV or Aids is also identified as an environmental risk factor (Meinck et al., 2015; Saloojee et al., 2007).

South Africa has high rates of child abuse and neglect. Meinck et al. (2015) cite prevalence rates of 19% for physical abuse, 26% for emotional abuse and state that 43% of OVCs report physical and emotional abuse. Negative life experiences, such as the loss of one or both parents, either by death or absconding, and the resulting living arrangements with foster or kinship placements, present an environmental risk factor across several domains for many children and young people in South Africa (Madhavan & Townsend, 2007; Nduna & Jewkes, 2012).

Family and community violence are environmental risk factors identified in the international literature that are echoed in the South African context. Family violence is reflected in high levels of abuse of children and domestic violence (Eaton et al., 2012; Meinck et al., 2015). Carlson (2006) discusses high levels of violence in rural communities, which is reflected in Meinck et al. (2015) and Tanur (2012) who discuss various aspects of community violence in South Africa. Gender based violence is a particular environmental risk factor in South Africa. High rates of sexual violence are reported; rape statistics are as much as three times higher per year than in the United States, and Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, and Rose-Junius (2005) maintain that 20,000 girl children are raped each year (Jewkes et al., 2006).
2.7.5.3. Steeling effects

The notion of ‘steeling effects’ was proposed by (Rutter, 2006, 2012). Rutter (2006) explains the concept of steeling effects using the analogy of a vaccination exposing the immune system to a measured dose of risk and the subsequent development of resistance to the disease. This then enables the person to fight the infection more effectively when exposed to the disease at a later stage. Rutter (2006) suggests that exposing the individual to measured amounts of risk, in a controlled manner, allows the person to learn to cope successfully with negative experiences and thus develop resilience.

In the context of this study one could argue that the emphasis and process of family reunification and the practice of weekend and holiday visitation to family members constitutes ‘steeling’ young people for their eventual return to their families of origin and communities. However, Olsson et al. (2003) and Kolar (2011) are critical of the notion of steeling effects, arguing that promoting resilience through deliberate exposure to risk is more complex than it appears. They maintain that while over-protection does little to foster the development of resilience, too much exposure too soon may overwhelm young people and consequently also does little to develop resilience (Kolar, 2011; Olsson et al., 2003). Further, Guest (2012) observes that reunions and separations between young people in care and biological mothers were destabilizing. In a situation where monitoring and follow up services are frequently non-existent, limited exposure to circumstances of risk may not necessarily contribute to the development of resilience in young people in care (Rogers, 2011). Kolar (2011) and Olsson et al. (2003) maintain that exposure to risk should be determined by young people and how they perceive their ability to engage with and manage a risk setting.

2.7.6. Protective factors

As previously discussed, risk factors increase the probability of negative outcomes, but protective factors alter the response to negative events in two possible ways: they serve either to promote a good outcome, or to reduce the likelihood of a negative outcome (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). The individual temperament of the child can be considered as an example. Having a warm, sunny disposition, and easy temperament are protective factors that may reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes for a child at risk. However, if the slow to warm up child, with a difficult temperament has a caregiver who is prepared to invest extra time and effort, or if the community has good child care facilities that the parents can afford, these may promote a good, or at least better, outcomes for the child.

In bringing this section of the literature review chapter to a close, it may be argued that if one considers resilience in CLs as outcomes, then it would appear that CLs are not resilient. The outcomes for CLs in terms of indicators such as mental health and cognitive and social functioning are not
encouraging. CLs have poorer educational and employment outcomes than their non-cared for peers (Martin & Jackson, 2002; Zetlin et al., 2010), are shown to have unresolved behavioural and conduct disorders (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006) as well as mental health issues (Betz, 2010) that impact on their adult functioning, have substance abuse problems (Braciszewski & Stout, 2012) and are over represented in the criminal justice system (Lee, Courtney, & Tajima, 2014).

However, van Breda (2017) found that children in a CYCC demonstrated the highest resilience profile of the seven sites used in his research. Similarly, Dickens (2016) notes significant resilience among her sample of CLs from the Girls and Boys Town study. These findings are encouraging, and point to the multi-faceted nature of resilience. Clearly resilience is a construct that does not lend itself to an evaluation based on ‘measureable’ outcomes alone. Thus, understanding resilience as a process, is critical to developing resilience in CLs. A process oriented understanding of resilience requires that risk and protective factors are considered and balanced (Olsson et al., 2003). By definition, YPIC have been exposed to risk factors. The South African literature reflects that CLs frequently return to home and community situations that continue to hold multiple risk factors (Mamelani, 2013; Tanur, 2012). To develop the resilience of CLs while they are in care, requires that protective factors, across all the domains of the YP’s ecological system, are identified and developed.

The resilience literature is encouraging in that it holds that resilience is not confined to childhood, but can develop across the lifespan. The next section of the literature review provides a discussion of resilience across the lifespan.

2.7.7. Resilience across the lifespan

The understanding of resilience has moved from the position of resilience being a fixed character trait that allows a person to be impervious to stress, to a more nuanced and complex understanding of the processes and dynamics that underpin resilience. It is encouraging, when considering resilience in young people, to realize that resilience can develop over the lifespan (Clinton, 2008; Walsh, 2003). Undoubtedly the work of Werner (1993) was pivotal in creating this awareness, as her longitudinal study showed that one third of at the risk children in her study had overcome the odds and were living successful lives into middle age. It is interesting to note, in the context of this study, that several individuals had not been functioning well as adolescents, but by adulthood were successful, citing life events as contributing factors (Werner, 1993). Rutter (1999, p. 119) refers to such events as “turning points”, arguing that opportunities and new experiences serve to reduce or neutralize risk factors. Turning points may be regarded as protective factors in adult life, and some examples from the literature include a good circle of friends, marriage and family, religious observance, and military service (Guest, 2012; Rutter, 1999). However, resilience across the life span is somewhat fluid, and
resilience is not always a given. Guest (2012) and Luthar and Cicchetti (2000) observe that a person may be resilient at one time, or in one context, but not necessarily at other times or in other contexts. However, opportunities for the development of resilience present over the lifespan and well into old age (Vandsburger, Schneller, & Murphy-Norris, 2006).

Resilience theory has undergone considerable development since its emergence in the social sciences, and it has also attracted criticism. The next section of the chapter examines the literature that offers a critique of resilience theory.

2.7.8. Critique of resilience theory

The idea of resilience has the potential to be a powerful and useful concept for theory and practice, and has generated a great deal of interest resulting in a substantial body of literature. However, several criticisms of resilience studies recur throughout, and warrant discussion in this review. The section opens with a discussion of the two primary critiques of resilience theory, namely definition and operationalization, which have consequences when conducting resilience research.

It is noted in the critique of resilience study that there is ambiguity and lack of consistency in definitions and terminology used in the resilience literature. Several authors (Fletcher & Sakar, 2013; Guest, 2012; Kolar, 2011) observe the lack of consistency in definitions, and remark that as resilience research grows, so do the attempts to define it, yet there is still no one single, universally applied definition. Although definitions and terminology may share some common elements there is considerable variation across these two domains (Guest, 2012; Winkler, 2014). Luthar and Cicchetti (2000) maintain that this lack of uniformity impedes the development of the field, and suggest that developing a common language will contribute towards raising the study of resilience to a new level, and Lipsitt and Demick (2013, p. 45) observe that “theoretical and methodological imprecision must be constantly addressed and refined”.

Winkler (2014) observes that the domains associated with resilience are well documented, but the nature of the association between domains and competency is left unexplained. Winkler (2014) comments that simply focussing on the qualities of resilience without developing a theoretical understanding of how resilience itself develops is incomplete. She asserts that there is a need to move beyond understanding resilience as a behaviour, toward a deeper understanding of how this critical competence develops (Winkler, 2014).

Several authors comment on the volume of resilience related publications in social work literature. There is, however, little research that assesses the applicability of resilience to social work practice (Daniel, 2006; McMurray, Connolly, Preston-Shoot, & Wigley, 2008; Winkler, 2014). This is
unfortunate, given that social workers work primarily with groups and individuals who live in circumstances of varying risk, and provides scope for an argument for including resilience theory in social work training and undergraduate level.

A further critique of resilience theory is that there is little agreement with regard to the operationalization and measurement of resilience constructs (Guest, 2012; Lipsitt & Demick, 2013). Kolar (2011) raises pertinent questions about the determination of adequate or exceptional adjustment, and asks what constitutes positive or negative adaptation or adjustment. The social and political contexts and implications of such judgments are not taken into consideration, and the benchmarks employed are frequently based on white middle class values and standards (Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Zolkoski and Bullock (2012) suggest that resilience may be context and content specific, and that individuals may be resilient when faced with one risk and not another. They argue that different combinations of assets and resources may result in different outcomes, and the processes of resilience may differ according to the person’s context; urban or rural, immigrant or non-immigrant or socio-economic status to cite a few examples (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). In addition, the social practices that contribute to resilience may not be equivalent across cultures (Theron et al., 2011). These questions raise concerns that lists of resilience factors may be generally understood and applied, when they may be inaccurate or inappropriate (Guest, 2012; Lipsitt & Demick, 2013; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000).

A final critique, related to the previous paragraph, is that resilience theory fails to take cognisance of the ecological context in which resilience develops (Fletcher & Sakar, 2013). The work of Michael Ungar (2012) foregrounds the significance of the ecological environment in the development of resilience. A discussion of “social ecologies and their contribution to resilience” (Ungar, 2012, p. 13) is provided in the next section of the literature review chapter.

2.7.9. The social ecologies of resilience

The heart of Ungar’s (2011, p. 1) conceptualization of resilience is found in the statement “resilience is less an individual trait and more a quality of the child’s social and physical ecology”. Ungar (2012, p. 14) argues that regarding resilience as a set of individual factors that may or may not make the child amenable to change, reflects a Western, individualistic stance that limits the understanding of resilience to “a fraction of potential factors”. Further, the focus on individual temperament or traits fails to recognise the social contexts and processes that contribute to risk or growth (Ungar, 2012).

In his 2005a paper, Ungar states that children need three key resources to facilitate the development of resilience: basic necessities (shelter, clothing, counselling); socio-political structures that ensure
safety, access to services and promote social justice; and relationships that facilitate healthy attachments and allow the child to be regarded as competent. If social ecological theory is applied to the resilience factor for CLs of success at school (Stein, 2008), the theory suggests that this particular resilience is less about the child’s natural intelligence, and more about living in an environment where the child’s basic needs are met, having access to a good quality school, and supportive and encouraging relationships.

However, this is not to say that social ecological theory denies the significance of personal agency. Ungar, Liebenberg, and Ikeda (2014, p. 677) refer to personal agency as “crucial to child development in adverse circumstances”, but it is how the child executes personal agency as they “navigate” and “negotiate” their way to the resources that will assist them that demonstrates their resilience (Ungar, 2005a, p. 424). Drawing again on the example of success at school (Stein, 2008), a YP who may have experienced multiple placements, a known risk factor, but negotiated his way to stay at one school throughout the placement changes, would be demonstrating personal agency and resilience. It may be argued that the child’s ability to navigate and negotiate is fostered in relationships that promote the child’s sense of worth and empowerment.

Social ecological theory goes on to argue that the development of resilience does not rest solely in the provision of services; the theory also holds that services must be provided in a way that is culturally relevant and meaningful (Ungar, 2006, 2012). This is particularly appropriate in the South African context, where services in CYCCs are often based on Western models yet provided to a largely African population of children and YP. Once again, using the example of educational success, CLs resilience in this respect may be better facilitated by locating the achievement of educational success in the African cultural meaning of being successful for the wider community, rather than for oneself (Theron, 2015).

2.7.10. Conclusion

Resilience as a concept has undergone significant development since its inception. Initially, the focus was on resilience in early childhood, and resilience was conceptualized as the individual strengths and qualities that helped children survive challenge and adversity. Four waves of research served to develop the theory of resilience to include a focus on systems, family, groups, services and communities. Resilience has been conceptualized in terms of outcomes or processes, and universal risk and protective factors have been identified. Encouragingly, resilience is also seen to develop over the lifespan. Finally, the concept of resilience moved from being understood solely as a quality internal to the individual, to an understanding that resilience is also a result of an interplay between
the individual, their social environments and the socio-political structures that either support or inhibit the development of resilience.

A substantial body of literature exists that considers the resilience of vulnerable YP across multiple domains, including parental alcohol and substance abuse (Kumpfer & Summerhays, 2006), children exposed to intimate partner violence (Gewirtz & Edleson, 2007), and YPs’ responses to trauma and loss (Clinton, 2008). The field of transition from care has attracted a significant amount of attention from resilience researchers such as Daining and DePanfilis (2007), Dent and Cameron (2003), Gilligan (2008) and Stein (2008). The findings support Masten’s (2001) view that resilience is fostered by a fairly small set of universal factors across personal, family and community domains. The next section of this literature review will discuss factors that contribute to the development of resilience in the context of young people in care. For the proposes of this review, and in keeping with the model that is adopted in the South African child and youth care system, a discussion of resilience factors relevant to CLs, and that pertain to the Circle of Courage, follows.

2.8. The Circle of Courage and resilience in CLs

The Circle of Courage is a conceptualization of Native American child development principles presented to an international conference in Washington by Bendtro, Brokenleg and van Bockern in 1988. The Circle of Courage has become an accepted model of intervention and development across many settings, including the family, education, peer group, juvenile justice and transition from care (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Jackson, 2014; Reid & Ross, 2005). The Circle of Courage forms the basis of the Individual Development Plan (IDP) used in South African statutory children’s services. Correlates of the four principles of the Circle of Courage are found in other theories of human development; for example in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, belonging is belongingness, mastery becomes esteem, independence is self-actualization and generosity, self-transcendence (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & van Bockern, 2014). Likewise in self-worth theory the same principles become significance, competence, power and virtue, and resilience theory speaks of attachment, achievement, autonomy and altruism (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & van Bockern, 2014). The great advantage of the Circle of Courage model is that it refines and hones the numerous variables related to positive youth development to four universal principles; belonging, mastery, independence and generosity (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Jackson, 2014; Brendtro, Mitchell, & McCall, 2009). Brendtro, Brokenleg, and van Bockern (2005, p. 131) refer to these as “critical indicators” or “vital signs” for positive youth development. These indicators and their connection to resilience and CLs are discussed in the sections that follow.
2.8.1. **Belonging/attachment**

Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Jackson (2014) maintain that the most significant human need next to survival, is to connect with others. Bowlby (cited in Howe, 1995) argued that one’s survival hinges on attachment with others, and that in the absence of healthy attachments to at least one other human being, infants and children fail to thrive, and present with a host of problems in a number of domains lifelong. Thus, belonging, or attachment, is crucial to human survival and well-being.

It may be argued that stability of placement is foundational to developing a sense of belonging in YPIC. Stein (2008) argues that stability of placement is a key promoter of resilience in YPIC. Frequent moves and disruptions impact on YPs’ ability form relationships, and disadvantages them when they leave the CYCC and try to make their way in the world. Stability of placement contributes to belonging, as in the context of a stable, supportive placement, YP are afforded the opportunity to form relationships that may mediate the effects of early trauma and neglect.

Clinton (2008) asserts that connectedness is at the centre of resilience. The CYCC is in a position to foster connectedness with YPIC in a number of ways. Consistent connection to a key adult has been shown to be of great significance in the development of resilience. Children and young people in care may not have secure attachments with their parents, but can benefit from secure attachments with their CYCW. Nurturance is identified by Herrmann et al. (2011) as a protective factor, and the importance of secure attachments to the development of resilience is frequently discussed in the literature (Dent & Cameron, 2003; Gewirtz & Edleson, 2007; Schofield, 2005). The relationships formed with caregivers are of especial importance to young people in care, as they play a significant role in balancing the effects of early childhood experiences of neglect or maltreatment and thus contributing to better outcomes for CLs (Dent & Cameron, 2003; Dickens, 2016).

The important role that CYCWs played in promoting feelings of security and being loved and cared for was evident in two South African studies: Bond (2010) and Dickens (2016). The participants in both studies commented on the connection and nurturance they felt in their relationship with their CYCWs. One participant could even evoke the sense of belonging and warmth she experienced from her CYCWs when she smelled either Sunlight soap or paraffin, fragrances she associated with her care-workers’ living area (Bond, 2010). However, this significant relationship should not end when the YP leaves the care system. The importance of maintaining this connectedness and its role in supporting the transition from care and improving the outcomes for CLs is discussed in the South African and international literature (Dickens, 2016; Gaskell, 2010; Pinkerton, 2012).
Connections can also be fostered with family members who may not be able to take over the full time care of the child or young person, but can nonetheless play a role in developing secure attachments. Close relationships that extend over time with family members who provide emotional support, assist with concrete support, perhaps provision of school stationery or personal toiletries, are instrumental in fostering secure attachments and thus the development of resilience (Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007). The participants in Dickens’ (2016) study felt that their families loved and supported them, and that it was important to remain close to their families. The importance of family relationships is particularly relevant in the South African context as the traditional collectivist African culture encourages a wide network of ‘family’ relationships (Theron & Theron, 2013). These may serve as resources for CLs when they return to their families and communities, thus easing the transition from care and contributing towards better outcomes for CLs.

2.8.2. Mastery/achievement

Mastery, in the Circle of Courage context, refers to the opportunity to solve problems and meet goals. The corresponding construct in the resilience view is achievement, which encompasses the motivation to work hard and attain excellence (Brendtro et al., 2005). The CYCC environment offers several spheres for the development of mastery. The simple day to day household chores and responsibilities are perhaps an obvious example of mastery, yet these are important contributors to resilience (Alvord & Grados, 2005). For example, mastery may be regarded as an asset (an individual characteristic), but mastery develops in the context of wider relationships with others. If YP are given opportunities within the CYCC to develop mastery (doing chores), and their efforts are remarked on and appreciated, they are provided with a base for ongoing experiences of being a competent person. Similarly experiences of failure have the potential to contribute to resilience. If YP are well supported, learning opportunities are created in which the focus is not on the failure, but the learning and moving on from the challenge (Fattore et al., 2008).

Similarly, attending school regularly and achieving their own level of educational success also contributes to a sense of achievement and mastery (Alvord & Grados, 2005). Although care leaving is associated with poor care educational outcomes (Dickens, 2016; Rogers, 2011), for many YPIC attending school contributes to their resilience, in spite of their ‘lack’ of academic achievement (Dickens, 2016; Höjer & Johansson, 2013; Stein, 2008). There is no question that education is a critical factor in relation to one’s ability to be self-sufficient and is the basis of future employability (Cashmore et al., 2007; Henig, 2009). However, the experience of attending school is often more subtly nuanced for YPIC. First, the school environment provides a space where YPIC can feel ‘normal’. Second, for many, their education was fragmented before they went into care, and for those who do not experience multiple moves while in care, attending school provides a second chance and
an opportunity to develop competence (Hojer & Johansson, 2013). However, it is important to note that YP may interpret success, particularly academic success, differently to adults. The emphasis for YP may be a feeling of having tried their best, not necessarily the achievement in terms of marks (Fattore et al., 2008). Thus encouraging YPIC to do their best, regardless of the ‘output’ in terms of grades may contribute to their sense of mastery and build their resilience.

Pro-social involvement is also recognized as contributing to the development of resilience and refers to participation in activities that promote positive development (Zimmerman et al., 2013). The potential of such activities is multifaceted, as they provide opportunities to explore new areas of interest, acquire skills and develop talent, experience success, exposes young people to positive peer and adult role models or mentors, encourages self-control and develops relationship skills (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Jackson, 2014; Stein, 2008; Zimmerman et al., 2013).

The concept of mastery goes deeper than simply doing well, or mastering tasks; in its fullest sense, mastery refers to the ability to overcome challenges, use healthy problems solving skills and feel that hardships have been overcome by one’s own efforts (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Jackson, 2014; Reid & Ross, 2005). The opportunities for the development of mastery listed above, may also provide scope for overcoming challenges and developing problem solving skills. These aspects of mastery are critical for South African CLs who leave the CYCC with no formal support systems to call on when they experience life challenges (Bond, 2015).

2.8.3. Independence/autonomy

Independence or autonomy requires that the person becomes self-regulating and refers to the ability to control one’s emotions and behaviour (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Jackson, 2014). Winkler (2014) argues that self-regulation is the most important attribute of the resilient individual, and that self-regulation is facilitated by the development of reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to the ability to acknowledge and reflect on one’s own, and others mental states and how these influence the behaviour of self and others (Clinton, 2008; Woodier, 2011). Dillen (2012) suggests that humour, as a component of resilience, is indicative of self-reflection and awareness. She suggests that humour demonstrates that a person has insight into themselves and their situation, and is able to put things into perspective and deal with their situation in a positive way. The development of reflexivity and self-regulation depend on the presence of securely attached, reflexive relationships (Winkler, 2014).

Autonomy also refers to self-efficacy as the autonomous person is able to make considered decisions, adopt a range of problem solving skills and accept responsibility for their actions (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & van Bockern, 2014; Gillespie, Chaboyer, & Wallis, 2007). Self-efficacy gives rise to
resilience as it develops the belief that one has the ability to deal with change and can employ a range of successful problem solving strategies (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007; Stein, 2008). Encouragingly, the participants in Dickens’ (2016) study felt reasonably confident of their ability to overcome problems and persist in the face of difficulty. As mentioned in the section above that discusses mastery, these skills are crucial to South African CLs in the absence of mandated transition services (Bond, 2015).

2.8.4. Generosity/altruism

According to Ai, Richardson, Lemieux, and Tice (2013) generosity and altruism are universal aspects of human morality, the foundation of which, according to Lietz (2011), is empathy. Mosavel, Ahmed, Ports, and Simon (2015) maintain that altruism is an important aspect of adaptive social behaviour. Altruistic propensities were identified by Mosavel et al. (2015) in a population of vulnerable and disadvantaged youth in South Africa. Although these young people experienced hardship and trauma, they retained the capacity to show concern for others. Staub and Vollhardt (2008) maintain that as a person heals, their suffering can become a source of empathy for others, leading to pro-social behaviour. Acts of kindness give purpose and meaning to the giver, instil hope in the recipient, and reflect and emphasize deep human connectedness (Ai et al., 2013). Altruism serves the common goals of happiness and progress, and is associated with reduced depression and stress, increased happiness and general well-being, greater self-worth and gives a sense of purpose to life (Ai et al., 2013; Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Jackson, 2014). This aspect of the Circle of Courage is particularly relevant in South Africa as this type of altruism is found in the concept of ‘Ubuntu’ (meaning, ‘I am what I am through others’), and is discussed by Theron and Theron (2013) as a significant contributor to resilience. Ubuntu encourages cooperative values and community mindedness and it is the role of the individual to “lift and inspire the collective” (Theron & Theron, 2013, p. 399). This core value could be used as a culturally appropriate motivator for CLs to do well in school, study further, or find employment.

On a practical level, encouraging young people in care to engage in service projects that promote generosity also promotes resilience as it exposes them to vocations and role-models they may otherwise not have experienced, and helps them to understand that they have talents and gifts to offer. This in turn facilitates a feeling of accomplishment, while developing an understanding of the value of hard work and self-discipline all of which are essential as YP leave the CYCC and transition into adult life (Reid & Ross, 2005).

The Circle of Courage is the framework for service provision in statutory children’s services in South Africa. It provides scope for the development of resilience in YPIC over the domains of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity, and has the potential to impact positively on care leaving
outcomes. The next section of the literature review discusses the theory of possible selves, which is the second theoretical framework utilized in this study.

2.9. Possible selves

The theory of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) is regarded as a relatively recent theory in the field of self-concept (Erikson, 2007). This section of the literature review describes the theory and the concepts of possible selves and their significance to the development of self. Although the theory has been applied over a diverse range of fields, the focus of this review will be on the literature concerning possible selves and young people. This will include discussions of possible selves in diverse populations of YP, gender differences in possible selves in YP, possible selves in delinquent populations of YP and the influence of possible selves in academic attainment. Finally, although possible selves is not a resilience theory per se, an argument linking possible selves to the development of resilience characteristics will be presented.

2.9.1. Overview of possible selves theory

Before embarking on a discussion of possible selves theory, it is important to note that future orientation is conceptualized by various authors in different ways. For example early authors such as Trommsdorff and Lamm (1980) and Nurmi (1991) wrote about future orientation as an important factor that influenced human thought and behaviour. More recently, Preyde et al. (2013) and Smith and Boone (2006) have commented on the role of future orientation in improving social adaptation and functioning and mental health. Van Audenhove and Laenen (2015), Sulimani-Aidan (2016a) and Sulimani-Aidan and Rami (2011) write of future expectations, whereas Preyde et al. (2013) speak of future outlook. Possible selves theory suggests that the future self is an aspect of the self-concept, making it a deeper, more integral concept than how a person thinks about their future. It is for this reason that possible selves theory has been chosen as a theoretical framework for this study.

The theory of possible selves was first suggested by Markus and Nurius in their seminal paper “Possible selves” (Markus & Nurius, 1986). It emerged in the 1980s at the height of the cognitive revolution in psychology, when there was recognition that the processes of thinking mattered, and in respect of the self, what people were thinking mattered as much as how they were thinking it (Markus, 2004). Markus and Nurius (1986) suggested that although research had shown that self-knowledge is both complex and diverse and has a significant effect in regulating behaviour, the area of possible selves remained unexplored. Markus and Nurius (1986, p. 954) referred to this type of self-knowledge as “critical”, arguing that this type of self-knowledge relates to how individuals think about their future and their potential.
Within the cognitive framework, self-knowledge, or self-concept is described as a system of cognitive structures, referred to as schemas, which provide structure and coherence to a person’s experiences (Barreto & Frazier, 2012; Erikson, Hansson, & Lundblad, 2012; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Such schemas are constructively generated using a person’s past experiences in a specific domain, reflect personal concerns that the individual considers to be meaningful and worthy of ongoing investment, and influence how information about the self is processed. Schemas determine what input is selected for attention, what is remembered, and the inferences drawn from the stimuli (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Thus, self-concept schemas can serve to regulate behaviour (Seli, Dembo, & Crocker, 2009).

The significance of memory on self-concept has long been recognized in literature (Strahan & Wilson, 2006). This is perhaps most clearly realized when the brain suffers insult, for example injury or illness. The resultant disturbance to a person’s sense of self is an indication of the importance of memory to self-concept (Clare et al., 2013; Doering, Conrad, Rief, & Exner, 2011; Rathbone, Moulin, & Conway, 2009).

Memories also have a powerful and direct influence on current mood and sense of well-being (Waters, 2014). The current self is influenced, not only by what is remembered, but how it is remembered. On a very straightforward level, recalling positive personal memories may improve affect and life satisfaction, and vice versa (Strahan & Wilson, 2006). Conversely, when current circumstances compare unfavourably to positive memories, life satisfaction and mood can be negatively affected. An evaluation of negative memories in the light of improved current circumstances can result in increased mood and self-concept (Strahan & Wilson, 2006).

While acknowledging the role that one’s past plays in establishing one’s sense of self, Markus and Nurius (1986) argued that in spite of developments in understanding self-concept as a complex dynamic phenomenon, empirical research lagged behind such rich conceptualizations. They argued that empirical study continued to endorse the traditional view of self-concept as a uniform, intractable structure that is consistent over time (McElwee & Dunning, 2005). Markus and Nurius (1986) posited that self-concept is a more encompassing phenomenon, extending its reach further in time, and reflecting potential for change and growth. Markus and Nurius (1986) specifically argued that considering what a person might become in the future, one’s possible self, also served to shape the current self and motivate behaviour.

2.9.2. **Possible selves as incentives**

Possible selves embody schematic self-knowledge particularly related to images of the self in the future (Seli et al., 2009). Hoyle and Sherrill (2006) maintain that possible selves are a subset of self-
knowledge, that are related to other representations of the self, but it is their future orientation that sets them apart. These may be past selves that are not relevant in the current context, but may become so in the future, or images of the self in the future that are hoped for, or feared, but are not yet realized (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). These future images embody goals, ambitions, fears and threats, and serve as incentives that motivate either the pursuit or avoidance of specific behaviours (Barreto & Frazier, 2012; Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Seli et al., 2009).

Markus and Nurius (1986) argue that the dynamic nature of possible-selves results from the inclusion of what is possible within self-concept; ideas about what it is possible for a person to become provide direction and stimulus for change. Theories of motivation recognize the importance of motive, goals and values as constituents of personality (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Markus and Nurius (1986) suggest that possible selves represent such motives, goals and values by giving them explicit cognitive shape, and personalizing motivation. Possible selves are conceptualized as cognitive links between the present and future, that provide cognitive representations and communication within the self-system (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The imaginative work that goes into the creation of possible selves has powerful consequences, as possible selves galvanise actions and shield the self from “everyday dragons” (Markus, 2004, p. xi).

There are three categories of possible selves: hoped for selves, for example a university student, professional person or parent; expected or probable selves; and feared possible selves such as high school drop-out or alcoholic (Barreto & Frazier, 2012; Seli et al., 2009). Markus and Nurius (1986) argued that hoped for or feared possible selves serve as motivating influences on behaviour, and Barreto and Frazier (2012, p. 1786) refer to these motivating influences as “pathways”, either towards a hoped for possible self, or away from a feared possible self. A person with a hoped for possible self of university graduate will follow pathways toward achievement, whereas someone with a feared possible self, such as becoming unemployed, will take steps to avoid this possible self (Barreto & Frazier, 2012). Possible selves do not necessarily function in isolation of one another; hoped for and feared possible selves may work together to achieve the same outcome, a process that Hoyle and Sherrill (2006) refer to as balancing. A hoped for self of healthy and fit, and a feared self of overweight and diabetic can both motivate a person towards improved physical health (Barreto & Frazier, 2012). Thus, possible selves serve as incentives, informing behaviour and regulating the self (Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004). Although the literature includes expected selves, there is little discussion about this aspect of the theory. Yowell (2002) argues that expected selves are essential to the achievement of hoped for possible selves, as they provide the concrete plans and strategies that move the individual towards goal achievement. However, the literature focusses predominantly on the hoped for and feared possible selves as motivators of behaviour.
2.9.3. Possible selves as a context for the current self

Possible selves also serve an important function in that they provide a context of additional meaning for a person’s current behaviour (Erikson et al., 2012). Strahan and Wilson (2006) state that individuals think about themselves in the future a lot of the time, and are more likely to endorse positive rather than negative possible selves. How people think about themselves in the future impacts on their evaluation of their current self, and how closely an individual feels they are either to their hoped-for or feared possible self, has been linked to evaluation of self, self-esteem, current mood and general life satisfaction (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; McElwee & Dunning, 2005; Segal, DeMeis, Wood, & Smith, 2001).

However, the current self is not shaped in isolation. Self-concept emerges from social interactions, the result of an interplay of interpersonal experiences and social environments (Strahan & Wilson, 2006). Processing and interpreting feedback in respect to what a person is or could become is also a means for constructing one’s possible selves. Sources of information about the self, and possible future selves, include the family, social and religious institutions, peers, educators and the media. The nature of one’s possible selves are strongly influenced by culture, class, family environments, personal experiences of success or failure, role models and the media (Carey & Martin, 2007; Clinkinbeard & Murray, 2012; Marshall, Young, Domene, & Zaidman-Zait, 2008; Nurius, Casey, Lindhorst, & Macy, 2006).

2.9.4. Consequences of possible selves for self-concept theory

Markus and Nurius (1986) note four issues that must be confronted by any theory of self-concept: self as a distorter; self-concept as stable or malleable; one true self or many selves; and the relationship between self-concept and behaviour. They suggest that if possible selves are included as part of the self-concept, these four issues may be resolved.

2.9.4.1. Self as distorter

The current self is constrained by a variety of social realities, and the tendency of individuals is to distort information or events in order to sustain the prevailing view of the self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Forgetting to attend to failures in the face of success, or regarding oneself as stupid or incompetent when achieving well are cited by Markus and Nurius (1986) as examples of self-distortions. They go on to argue that such distortions can be explained if one considers that a possible self may be at work in the working self-concept, causing behaviours that are, apparently, at odds with what others understand as the persons ‘true’ self (Markus & Nurius, 1986).
The current self may well be challenged by a failure, but the network of constructive possibilities remains intact, serving as internal resources for the person and allowing a measure of protection from the threat to self-esteem. Possible selves are often only known to the person who holds them, and only the person concerned can determine what is challenging or confirming about their possibilities. Markus and Nurius (1986) argue that for this reason possible selves encourage hope that the current self is not incontrovertible and are thus extremely liberating. Conversely, possible selves may also be powerfully imprisoning as the associations that accompany them may hinder attempts to change or develop (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

2.9.4.2. Stability or malleability of self-concept

Markus and Nurius (1986) acknowledge the dichotomy of self-concept as stable or malleable, and recognize the bodies of literature that argue for either position. However, Markus and Nurius (1986) suggest that including possible selves as a part of self-concept provides an explanation for both the malleability and stability of self-concept.

Markus and Nurius (1986) argue that the now self that is located in the public domain, may well remain essentially stable. They suggest that reasons for this stability may be found in invariances in social feedback and objects of social comparison found in the individual’s environment, and the need to present oneself in a consistent manner (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Challenges to self-concept may elicit powerful emotions, such as fear, anger, shame and embarrassment, and people may resist or deny challenging feedback. Markus and Nurius (1986) argue that the emotions attendant to challenges to the self-concept may be the result of the activation of a series of negative possible selves and their associated fears and anxieties. The challenge may be reflected in the range of possible selves that become available and influence the interpretation and evaluation of the now self. Further, such variations in the working self-concept can have significant consequences for mood, self-esteem, immediate thoughts and actions, and may influence more gradual and long-term changes in self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Thus, possible selves may be instrumental in temporary changes in self-evaluation, and also in long-term, more enduring changes. To illustrate this point Markus and Nurius (1986) use the example of the concept of competence over the life span. The notion of self as ‘competent’ may be enduring over the life-span, but have different meanings at different developmental points. Competence to an adolescent may be viewed as living independently, whereas the same individual at age 40 might well define competence in terms relating to parenting and financial stability (Markus & Nurius, 1986).
2.9.4.3. One self, many selves

Markus and Nurius (1986) raise the issue of the self as a single authentic entity, or a series of masks, each belonging to a particular social circumstance. They argue that this conceptualization fosters the understanding of the self as false, bland and incoherent, and suggest that regarding possible selves as systematic components of self-concept allows self-concept to be understood as rich, diverse and multifaceted. The inclusion of possible selves allows for a complex and variable self-concept, but because they represent persistent hopes and fears that could be realized given appropriate social circumstances, they are authentic (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Markus and Nurius (1986, p. 965) adopt the position that the idea of one true self denies the “rich network of potential that surrounds people”, and go on to suggest that because possible selves are differentially activated by social situations, they contribute to the fluidity and malleability of the self.

2.9.4.4. Self-concept and behaviour

Markus and Nurius (1986) assert that research concerning self-concept has the intent of relating self-concept to ongoing behaviour. They use the example of changing academic behaviour by changing the academic self-concept. However, the challenge in making this link is that although behaviour may be changeable, the self-concept is assumed to be stable. The importance of the mediating effect of self has been recognized, but Markus and Nurius (1986) assert that the exact nature of self-concept and how it exerts influence on behaviour is missing. They further maintain that it may not be possible for a person to sustain the positive thoughts generated about themselves in a supportive environment such as a therapy session, in a different context. Creating positive thoughts may be insufficient to regulate behaviour if they are not developed in a context of specific positive possibilities in the area of concern (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

In concluding their original article, Markus and Nurius (1986) comment that it is the task of future empirical study to refine and develop their initial concept. Hoyle and Sherrill (2006) trace the development of possible selves’ theory and present an overview of how the theory evolved in the next decade following the original paper.

2.9.5. Development of the original possible selves conceptualization

The original conceptualization characterized possible selves as components of a vibrant self-system with potential to impact behaviour (Markus & Nurius, 1986). However, the particular aspects of possible selves that may inform behaviour were not identified (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). Later work extended the original concept to make the posited link between future possible selves and behaviour more apparent (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006).
Markus and Ruvolo (1989, p. 213 & 217) described possible selves as “action-oriented representations” and “cognitive/affective elements that incite and direct one’s self-relevant actions”. These descriptions placed possible selves within more general models of information processing (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). Using this perspective, it was suggested that possible selves provide individuals with a picture of themselves behaving in a way that is pertinent to those self-representations (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). In doing so, cues relevant to those behaviours become accessible, and therefore serve to produce behaviour motivated by a possible self (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). The accessibility of such cues may be attributed to the fact that information processing is influenced by the working self-concept, and that emergent goals are both specific and self-defining (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006).

A further development to the original concept was the understanding that some possible selves have more potential to direct behaviour than others. Oyserman et al. (2004, p. 132) refer to these as” self-regulatory possible selves”, and suggest that such possible selves consist of a self-defining goal and concrete behavioural plans for achieving it. However, not all possible selves sustain self-regulatory action, and according to Oyserman et al. (2006) self-regulatory effort increases when possible selves are balanced, i.e. there are hoped for and feared possible selves in the same sphere. Individuals with balanced possible selves have a positive, self-identifying goal to work towards, which is balanced by an understanding of the personal cost if the goal is not met (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). Oyserman et al. (2006) suggest that when possible selves are balanced people are more likely to select chose behaviours that improve the prospect of accomplishing positive possible selves, and reduce the chance of becoming their negative possible selves. Strategies that that may simultaneously increase the possibility of attaining positive possible selves but decrease the possibility of avoiding negative possible selves will be avoided (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). This balancing of possible selves serves to focus self-regulatory behaviour and broaden effort (Oyserman et al., 2006; Oyserman & Markus, 1990). Lack of balance in possible selves may mean that the individual acts without pausing to weigh the consequences of their behaviour (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Oyserman & Saltz, 1993).

However, possible selves, as agents of self-regulation, are only effective when the possible self is felt to be plausible, contains detailed strategies for achievement, is felt to be congruent with important social identities, when the social context supports the possible self, and when the challenges experienced when working towards the possible self are understood as normative (Oyserman et al., 2006).
This review has thus far considered the initial possible selves theory and its development. A review of the literature that critiques possible selves theory follows, before the literature review moves on to considering possible selves in applied fields.

2.9.6. Critique of possible selves theory

While the theory of possible selves was hailed as an exciting and innovative development in self-concept theory, it has nonetheless, attracted some criticism and comment principally from Erikson (2007) and Hoyle and Sherrill (2006).

Erikson (2007, p. 349) argues that the definition and working concepts in the original work are “fuzzy”, and that the lack of clarity and precision have had consequences for conceptualization and methodology in ensuing studies. Erikson (2007) maintains that the absence of a clear definition poses a risk that possible selves will be defined either too broadly or too narrowly. He goes on to suggest that the possible selves concept might be used more often and more effectively if the definition were less ambiguous. When possible selves are too broadly defined, they expand to include generalized hopes and fears that may not be possible selves. Generalized selves could also include possible selves that could, more correctly, be labelled as life tasks (for example being a good parent). In addition, possible selves may be so broad that they represent global beliefs about socially desirable or undesirable futures, without having any possible selves connected to them (Erikson, 2007).

According to Erikson (2007), definitions of possible selves that are too narrow have also been employed in the literature. He maintains that focussing only on possible selves that pertain to a feeling of what might become or fears becoming, limits the discussion of possible selves to ‘developing into’ representations of the future. Another way of too narrowly defining possible selves is to see possible selves only in terms of actual representations of what the person thinks or fears will happen. Erikson (2007) argues that this narrow view excludes those possible selves that may well be unrealistic, but can still be the stuff of daydreams, or imagined fears that serve to control the threat and render it improbable.

In order to address these limitations of the definition of possible selves, Erikson (2007) proposes an expanded definition of possible selves. The refined definition includes two additional defining components: self-narratives of one’s future and agency (Erikson, 2007; Tse et al., 2014). Erikson (2007) argues that the inclusion of narratives emphasises the potential of possible selves to provide rich information and that possible selves are often linked or nested together. He also suggests that through narratives, possible selves are demonstrated as having experiential meaning. Including agency in the definition of possible selves suggests that one has agency to influence the achievement
of possible selves, shifting them from mere representations of a future self (Erikson, 2007). However, it appears from reviewing the literature that the revised definition has not been adopted, and that the original conceptualization remains the definition of choice for the majority of writers.

The critique offered by Hoyle and Sherrill (2006) concerns the utility of the possible selves construct. Hoyle and Sherrill (2006, p. 1687) acknowledge that the extensive body of possible selves literature that has emerged has provided a “rich source of information about the variety of ways in which people see themselves in the future. However, they go on to comment that the literature does not discuss the processes employed when future depictions of possible selves guide current behaviour. Their point is summed up with the observation that although a great deal is known about what possible selves are, not a lot is known about how they work (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006).

Hoyle and Sherrill (2006) question the position that possible selves mediate personal functioning and are significant regulators of behaviour in themselves, arguing instead that possible selves are key components in the processes by which behaviour is regulated. Hoyle and Sherrill (2006) comment that the existing literature has examined possible selves as a stand-alone construct, and argue that this has served to limit the application of the theory. They maintain that embedding the possible selves construct within models that specify the process through which possible selves might serve to influence behaviour will expand and deepen the utility of the possible selves theory (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). Hoyle and Sherrill (2006) argue specifically for embedding possible selves theory into models of self-regulation. Dunkel, Kelts, and Coon (2006) bring together possible selves and Prochaska and DiClemente’s (1984) stages of change theory to suggest that the stage of change influences the number of possible selves generated and Marshall, Young, and Domene (2006) integrate possible selves into action theory. Thus from these, admittedly limited, examples, it may be suggested that the construct of possible selves is suited to being embedded in other theory, and doing so may increase its utility.

This section of this chapter has concentrated on the theoretical concepts, development and critique of the possible selves theory. A discussion of the applications of possible selves theory follows, commencing with an overview of the broader applications of the theory, and then moving on to a particular focus on the literature concerning young people.

2.9.7. Application of possible selves theory

Since Markus and Nuius’ (1986) original article was published, an impressive body of literature concerning possible selves has been generated (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). Perhaps, not surprisingly, much of the research has focussed on the challenges and issues faced by YP as they strive for identity
and to achieve their possible selves. However, the possible selves literature also includes studies that examine possible selves across the life span (Frazier & Hooker, 2006), and possible selves in diverse fields ranging from mental illness, eating and personality disorders (Erikson et al., 2012; Janis, Veague, & Driver-Linn, 2006; Tse et al., 2014), to career change (Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007) and life transitions (Barreto & Frazier, 2012). This review will concentrate mainly on possible selves in YP, as this is the focus of this study. However, a brief overview of other applications of possible selves theory is included to provide an idea of the scope of the available literature.

2.9.7.1. Possible selves across the lifespan

From a lifespan development perspective, possible selves may represent the processes by which people re-structure self-orientated goals in order to sustain competency and well-being (Ko, Mejía, & Hooker, 2014). According to Ko et al. (2014) the perceived ability to effectively pursue and accomplish possible selves, and engaging in activities consistent with one’s possible selves increases positive affect and decreases the risk of long term mortality among older adults. There are differences in the possible selves of older adults to those of younger people. For example Bybee and Wells (2006) note that a desire for physical and strength is common among young people, but in individuals over the age of 45 exercise is regarded as a necessary chore. Similarly, allusions to the body as an object of beauty fade during adult development (Bybee & Wells, 2006). Frazier and Hooker (2006) note distinct trends in possible selves across the lifespan. During middle age possible selves pertain to generativity tasks, such as the successful parenting of teenage and early adult children, maintaining and building the spousal relationship, adjusting to the changes of ageing and accommodating elderly parents. The decline in physical health and strength, as well as change in living arrangements and adjusting to retirement comprise the hoped and feared possible selves of older adults (Frazier & Hooker, 2006). The older age group reflects a trend of more feared possible selves with dependency and health related fears emerging strongly (Anthis, 2006).

Still keeping with possible selves across the lifespan, possible selves theory has been extensively applied to academic motivation and career development in YP, but is also relevant to career development and change in adults (Oyserman et al., 2006; Plimmer, 2012; Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007). Plimmer and Schmidt (2007) suggest that adults return to the learning arena for a number of reasons, bring different strengths and face different challenges to younger people. Career transitions for adult learners may be driven by an attempt to break free from restricted roles, a feeling of limited opportunities, or a search for meaning (Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007). The adult learner brings a wealth of life experience to their learning, but may face practical constraints and pressures due to family and work commitments (Plimmer, 2012). In addition, the learning environment may challenge and threaten deeply held beliefs and opinions for the adult learner (Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007). Plimmer
and Schmidt (2007) posit possible selves as a useful framework for adult education, arguing that possible selves facilitates change and development based on a positive, strengths based approach. For adult learners it may present the chance to consider different selves, and find “a new and liberating frame of reference with which to interpret the world” (Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007, p. 65).

2.9.7.2. Possible selves and mental illness

The theory of possible selves has also been applied to the field of mental illness. Negative selves have been found to have a direct bearing on depression (Penland, Masten, Zelhart, Fournet, & Callahan, 2000). Depressed individuals have a negative perception of themselves, their futures and the world, and conceptualize their futures with more negative possible expectations (Penland et al., 2000). This finding is also consistent with Erikson et al. (2012), who found an increased number of negative possible selves among anorexic women compared to a control group. Likewise, the endorsement of negative selves, present and future, is more likely in individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder (Janis et al., 2006). However, women with Borderline Personality Disorder endorse positive and negative possible selves. It is believed that this creates an inner contradiction which is a fundamental part of their self-image and gives rise to the behaviours associated with this disorder (Janis et al., 2006).

According to Norman, Windell, Lynch, and Manchanda (2014), the diagnosis of mental illness requires letting go of many positive possible selves. For people with a confirmed diagnosis of mental illness, perceptions of their futures include the increased likelihood of feared possible selves, which has a significant impact on their psychological state (Norman et al., 2014). The perception of how one will be in the future, specifically in terms of negative possible selves, has been found to be an independent predictor of depressed mood, anger, hostility and irritability as well as low self-esteem, among patients with a diagnosed psychological disorder (Norman et al., 2014; Tse et al., 2014). Although this aspect of possible selves is included in the more general review of the possible selves literature, it is also relevant to the section that follows concerning possible selves among vulnerable populations of young people, given that mental illness is prevalent among CLs (Berzin et al., 2011; Betz, 2010).

2.9.7.3. Possible selves and adolescence

Possible selves theory is germane to studies focussing on adolescents, as self-concept during this developmental stage is at its most highly differentiated (Knox et al., 2000). The trying on of different selves is a significant contributor to achieving the end goal of adolescence, which is consolidating one’s identity (Santrock, 2013). Dunkel (2000, p. 520) and Dunkel and Anthis (2001, p. 766) describe identity as one’s “self-theory”, and maintain that people actively construct their identity, or self-
theory. Therefore, according to Dunkel (2000, p. 520), the exploration of identity choices is the “cornerstone of identity construction”. The generation of possible selves is part of the exploration process, as the individual generates and tests hypotheses about the self and adjusts the self-theory accordingly (Dunkel, 2000). But this process does not end with the generation and contemplation of alternatives. Possible selves act as goals, and identity commitment solidifies goals with a decision and commitment to pursue specific goals, for example career choice, which is a core component of the identity formation process (Dunkel, 2000; Dunkel & Anthis, 2001). Dunkel and Anthis (2001) maintain that commitment is also a process which is not complete when some alternatives are chosen over others. Chosen alternatives become important to identity when supported by personal investment. As personal investment increases, the possible self becomes more stable and therefore an integral part of one’s identity or self-theory (Dunkel, 2000; Dunkel & Anthis, 2001).

It has been argued in this review that developmental processes, cognitive and physiological, continue beyond adolescence into emerging adulthood, and so it is reasonable to suggest that as YP leave one context, be it their family of origin, or CYCC, the process of trying out possible selves continues as they go forward into the worlds of work, unemployment, further education, and social and romantic spheres. Barreto and Frazier (2012) suggest the catalogue of possible selves available to an individual may also include life events, particularly when the events are stressful or perceived to be impacting on the person’s sense of self. However, the production and internalization of possible selves may be limited by the person based on their abilities (perceived or actual) and context (Dunkel, 2000).

2.9.7.4. Gender differences in YPs’ possible selves

Historically there is an understanding that self-concept is influenced by gender (Henry & Cliffordson, 2013). Female conceptualizations of self tend to revolve around qualities that build interpersonal relationships, for example humour, sympathy, generosity and social competence (Henry & Cliffordson, 2013; Knox, 2006). Male self-concepts, by contrast, are typically centred around autonomy, agency and achievement of personal goals (Knox, 2006). Self-esteem is derived, or lost, from an evaluation of how well one is achieving in the relevant gender domains (Knox et al., 2000). These differences have raised questions about gender differences in possible selves and the literature suggests that there are differences in the imagined futures of young women and young men (Segal et al., 2001).

According to Henry and Cliffordson (2013) and Perry and Vance (2010), the imagined futures of young women are more likely to include relationships with others and family roles. However, Perry and Vance (2010) suggest that young women also envision futures that include the possibility of combining family and career, and express career aspirations that move them into domains
traditionally viewed as the prerogative of males. Young women are also beginning to describe their possible selves in terms that encompass attributes such as ‘assertive’ and ‘self-sufficient’ (Knox, 2006). These are interesting and encouraging developments, but also have the potential to create internal conflict for young women, as female self-esteem is largely determined by the state of relationships with others (Knox, 2006). Challenge to the internally, parentally and societally defined ‘ideal’ may result in an internal sense of disappointment, and lead to an abandonment of the more ‘controversial’ possible self (Knox, 2006; Knox et al., 2000).

Feared possible selves for young women are also conceptualized in terms of relationships, particularly matters of conflict and conflict resolution (Knox et al., 2000). Interestingly, young women are more readily able to access and envision relational failures and evaluate their feared possible selves as significantly more likely than their male peers (Henry & Cliffordson, 2013; Knox et al., 2000; Segal et al., 2001). This difference may be because the capacity to imagine and develop possible selves is related, to a degree, to a person’s capacity for self-reflection (Knox, 2006). The aptitude for such contemplation is a particular characteristic of adolescent females (Knox, 2006).

Hoped and feared possible selves for young men are not well articulated, but hoped for selves are connected to getting ahead and being assertive. Feared selves concerning occupational failure were common to the sources consulted for this literature review (Henry & Cliffordson, 2013; Knox, 2006; Knox et al., 2000; Segal et al., 2001). Further, young men from lower socio-economic groups do not hope or expect to achieve significant prestige in their future employment, and are more likely to anticipate scenarios of total failure in this realm (Perry & Vance, 2010).

The gendered difference in the development of possible selves may be attributed to psychological maturity. The generation of possible selves requires the ability to think about hypothetical conceptions of the self, to envision positive and negative versions of the self and to consider change to the self (Knox et al., 2000). At this developmental stage adolescent girls and young women are psychologically more mature than their male counterparts (Knox, 2006). Knox (2006) also suggests that males at this stage of development are less future orientated and therefore less likely to regard hypothetical self-views as important.

2.9.7.5. Possible selves in YP at risk

Differences in possible selves are also noted in groups of YP from contexts identified as ‘normative’ and as ‘at risk’ (Sica, 2009). YPIC are regarded at risk in a number of respects. The factors that led to their placement in a CYCC are risk factors from emotional, developmental and cognitive perspectives, the care context itself and the poor outcomes associated with it are recognized as placing
YP at risk (Stein, 2005; Whetten et al., 2009). Difficult life circumstances, low socio-economic systems and involvement in assistance programmes are included in the definition of ‘at risk’ used by Sica (2009), supported by Kloep, Hendry, Gardner, and Seage (2010) and Mainwaring and Hallam (2010). According to the literature cited above, youth at risk have difficulty constructing a believable, satisfying future.

This is reflected in van Breda’s (2010) work with a group of disadvantaged YP in a South African township, and in my own experience as a social worker conducting life skills groups in a school located in a low socio-economic catchment area. These YP had exaggerated and extravagant ideas of their hoped for possible selves that were not grounded in academic reality, or feasibility in terms of finances and other structural supports that would be necessary to achieve their ideas. Segal et al. (2001) comment on the grandiose nature of possible selves in YP at risk. In addition, Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) suggest that YP at risk show an inability to establish a workable plan to take them in the direction of their hoped for possible selves, and this has been my experience in practice. Further, the unrealistic nature of YPs’ hoped for possible selves was not balanced by a more attainable expected possible self. Instead, the expected possible self was generally thinly described, lacking a sense of hope, and confidence of change and better outcomes (Sica, 2009). Oyserman et al. (2006) and Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) attribute this to an absence of successful role models, the socio-economic context and culture, and the YPs’ understanding of life difficulty as synonymous with inevitable failure.

In contrast, and not surprisingly, Oyserman and Markus’ (1990) and Mainwaring and Hallams’ (2010) findings that YP from a ‘normative’ context are able to generate more possibility connected to a desirable future, and are able to construct a workable and realistic plan to achieve their goals, which has also been my experience when working with YP. This difference points to the importance of generating resources for YPIC in the shape of invested adults who serve to expand the range of hoped for possible selves in YPIC by acting as role models, and who encourage and facilitate educational motivation and attainment, which may contribute to YPs resilience and improved outcomes for CLs (Carey & Martin, 2007; Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010).

2.9.7.6. Possible selves and YP with delinquent behaviour

A major task of adolescence is that of creating and defining the self as one is going to become, and is a recurring theme throughout the literature and this review. Sources of future possible selves are found in social roles, life events and the circumstances within which these are placed (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman & Markus, 1990). In order to engage with the task of creating and defining the self YP must be able to construct positive possible selves that are satisfying, and can serve as motivators
in the transition to adulthood (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). YP who cannot construct or maintain positive possible selves across traditional, socially sanctioned domains, for example family, friends and education, or for whom avenues to positive possible selves, such as leaving home, finding work and living independently, are unattainable may seek out alternate ways to define the self (Oyserman & Markus, 1990; Oyserman & Saltz, 1993).

When positive possible selves are unachievable, rebellious or negative behaviour may be framed as adventurous, powerful or tough in an effort to compensate. If this behaviour is sanctioned by peers, the negative self, which is validated by this important social group, may become part of the YP’s identity (Oyserman & Saltz, 1993). Unfortunately for such YP, the creation of positive possible selves may be insufficient to lure them away from the exciting possibilities of delinquency (Oyserman & Markus, 1990).

Oyserman and Markus (1990) note significant differences in the possible selves generated by delinquent and non-delinquent YP. Non-delinquent YP are more likely to construct achievement related possible selves, such as hoping and expecting to do well at school and fearing failing at school. In a marked contrast, the possible selves generated by delinquent YP reflected major issues such as depression, isolation and addiction, and their feared selves focussed on involvement with crime or drugs (Oyserman & Markus, 1990).

The importance of balance between hoped for and feared possible selves in relation to the effectiveness of possible selves, identified by Oyserman and Markus (1990) as a motivator of behaviour, has been discussed in this literature review. With regard to balance between possible selves, there are also differences between delinquent and non-delinquent YP, with delinquent YP showing little balance between expected and feared possible selves compared with their non-delinquent peers (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). For example, feared selves of becoming a criminal were not balanced by expected selves of avoiding crime and attaining any kind of conventional achievement (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). Oyserman and Markus (1990) argue that two distinct consequences may result from this lack of balance. First, YP may become trapped in negative behavioural patterns when they cannot imagine different conduct to their current behaviour. These YP may be less motivated to avoid delinquent behaviour and take directive action when they are unable to balance their worries about being depressed, alone or unemployed in a way that is believable and relevant to them (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). This further adds to their risk of feared possible selves dominating as delinquent activity, or substance abuse may appear to offer immediate relief from feared selves. Second. Oyserman and Markus (1990) state that without balance between
expected and feared possible selves, YP may drift among desired possible selves without being able to choose among them and commit to an appropriate course of action.

2.9.7.7. Possible selves and social competence in YP

Oyserman and Saltz (1993) link lack of balance in possible selves to concepts of social competence and incompetence in YP. According to Oyserman and Saltz (1993), adolescents must learn to competently negotiate with the significant people in their social environment. This negotiation requires that a YP is able to understand the expectations of, and receive feedback from, their partners in negotiations. The ability to transform preferred identities afforded by the social environment is critical to success in this negotiation process (Oyserman & Saltz, 1993). YP who have this ability are regarded as socially competent, and their interactions with others and their environments are marked by some key characteristics.

Socially competent YP have the ability to evaluate their behavioural options in given situation, and make behavioural choices will optimize their prospects of achieving a chosen possible self (Oyserman & Saltz, 1993). Oyserman and Saltz (1993) use the example of a hoped for possible self as ‘independent’, and the behavioural choice of responsible behaviour (doing chores and homework) or staying out beyond curfew, to illustrate this point. Socially competent YP are also more likely to seek assistance from others, parents, teachers, classmates as they work towards attaining their desired possible selves (Kloep et al., 2010; Oyserman & Saltz, 1993). Enlisting help allows for the development of the idea that success is possible, and because they have experienced success, socially competent YP are more likely to work to attain their positive, and avoid their feared possible selves (Kloep et al., 2010; Oyserman & Saltz, 1993).

Social competence develops within the framework of successful and helpful interactions with significant others (Clinkinbeard & Murray, 2012; Oyserman & Saltz, 1993). YP who present with behavioural challenges or delinquent behaviour are more likely to have interactions with parents, teachers and conventional peers that are frustrating and unrewarding (Oyserman & Saltz, 1993). Possible selves are more likely to be pursued if they are understood to be accessible and available (Marshall et al., 2008). Having little, if any, experience of success in their attempts to attain positive possible selves, socially incompetent YP are more likely to be impulsive and susceptible to immediate pressures or opportunities in their environments (Oyserman & Saltz, 1993). Such YP are unlikely to be able to generate conventionally positive possible selves that pave the way to independent, competent adulthood (Oyserman & Saltz, 1993).
Oyserman and Markus (1990) and Oyserman and Saltz (1993) studied delinquent youth, and while this may be a harsh and inaccurate descriptor to apply to YPIC, there is abundant literature that evidences the prevalence and severity of behavioural problems in YPIC (Driscoll, 2011; Samuels, 2011; Ziviani, Feeney, Cuskelly, Meredith, & Hunt, 2012). In the absence of conventional educational achievement, and when confronted with challenging behaviour, it is not unreasonable to suggest that some YPIC may be regarded as socially incompetent, and their construction of possible selves impacted accordingly.

2.9.7.8. Possible selves and YPIC and CLs

YP from vulnerable populations may experience limited potential for developing possible selves because role models for academic and occupational outcomes are absent in their social contexts (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). In their home or community contexts YP may not be exposed to role models who pursued a career instead of settling for a job. This is of particular concern for YPIC, as the literature reflects that the emphasis for many is on securing immediate employment rather than long-term career development (Henig, 2009). Unemployment is one of the major challenges for CLs, and many find themselves trapped in low paying and/or temporary jobs, effectively condemning them to a continuation of the cycle of poverty (Henig, 2009; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006).

For YPIC their social identity as a ‘children’s home child’ may also conflict with certain possible selves. The literature notes that negative stereotyping occurs when YP are known to be placed in a children’s home (Bond, 2010; Martin & Jackson, 2002). Such a placement appears to carry negative associations and assumptions about behaviour and capacity which are conveyed through stories, metaphors and images (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). These interactions with society carry socially constructed and construed messages about what YPIC can or cannot achieve or do, and thus may limit the potential for positive possible selves (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006).

YP also learn about what is or is not possible or valued via direct feedback from their social environments, and the feedback they receive may be either reinforcing and liberating, or restrictive and undermining (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). Unfortunately, the literature reflects that staff in CYCCs have low expectations with regard to the potential of the YP in their care (Martin & Jackson, 2002; Zetlin et al., 2010). It may not be unreasonable to assume that such views will influence the opportunities sourced and made available to YPIC. Further, YPIC may embrace negative possible selves in the absence of feedback or opportunity regarding potential positive possible selves (Jansen, 2010).
Possible selves theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals develop behavioural strategies in order to direct their efforts towards change and growth and may also serve to develop resiliency. Future focus is documented as a contributing factor to developing resilience in CLs (Sulimani-Aidan, 2016a). Strong possible selves increase a person’s sense of self-control and self-efficacy. These qualities contribute to positive coping and perseverance, which in turn heighten success in overcoming adversity (Nurius et al., 2006). All of these are qualities of resilience, as identified by Dent and Cameron (2003) and Gillespie et al. (2007). Conversely, when positive possible selves are lacking, adolescents have fewer internal guides (cognitive, emotional or motivational) for developing identity and fulfilling a valued outcome. This leaves the YP susceptible to confusion, self-doubt and developing negative possible selves. A high number of negative positive selves is associated with poor coping strategies, for example avoidance or withdrawal (Nurius et al., 2006). The net result of using such strategies may be the perception that the YP has poor problem solving skills and a lack of agency to effect change, which can result in feelings of hopelessness (Frydenberg & Lewis, 2009). Thus possible selves may serve either to foster hope and promote positive development, or to stifle attempts to change and grow, depending on whether positive or negative possible selves predominate (Segal, 2006).

Finally, the recent work of Sulimani-Aidan (2015, 2016a; Sulimani-Aidan & Rami, 2011) is particularly germane to this study as she concentrates on the future focus of CLs, a previously neglected field of study. Sulimani-Aidan and Rami (2011) suggest that although there is a substantial body of literature that discusses the outcomes for CLs and their needs, there is little that examines their future focus. They further argue that future focus contributes to identity formation and is an essential component of life at all developmental stages, but particularly in times of transition and change, and thus of special importance to CLs (Sulimani-Aidan & Rami, 2011). Having a positive future focus is associated with better outcomes for YP, contributing to lower rates of risky behaviours. A positive future focus has also been shown to serve as a protective factor for stressed or at risk YP, which may serve CLs well as they return to difficult home circumstances (Sulimani-Aidan, Benbenishty, Dinisman, & Zeira, 2013). Most recently, Sulimani-Aidan (2016a) argues that future focus is a resilience factor in its own right as it contributes to many aspects of resilience.

This section of the literature review has demonstrated that theory of possible selves has been applied across various fields of study, for example academic motivation and attainment in high school and college students (Oyserman et al., 2006), delinquency (Oyserman & Markus, 1990), psychological disturbance (Janis et al., 2006) and eating disorders (Erikson et al., 2012). Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) maintain that extending the study and application of possible selves to include minority groups has the potential to narrow the gap between ethnic minority and white YP. That argument may be
extended to suggest that including the care context in the discussion of possible selves has the potential to narrow the divide between the outcomes for YPIC and their non-cared for peers.

The final section of the literature review provides a small discussion of social workers and child and youth care workers.

2.10. Social workers and child and youth care workers

This literature review would not be complete without a discussion of the social workers and child and youth care workers who play a pivotal role in the lives of YPIC. Unfortunately, there is a scarcity of literature that examines the needs and challenges of social workers and child and youth care workers in respect of YPIC and CLs (Sulimani-Aidan, 2017a). The one article referenced by Sulimani-Aidan (2017a) is, unfortunately for the purposes of this study, written in Hebrew (Sulimani-Aidan, 2016c). YPIC frequently present with cognitive, emotional and behavioural challenges that their caregivers have to manage and address (Barford & Whelton, 2010). Zerach (2013, p. 73) refers to social workers and child and youth care workers as “front line staff” presenting a compassionate discussion of the role of care workers in dealing with YPs’ crises, managing their challenging behaviour and being the first to hear of their traumatic life stories, with little training and low levels of appreciation. It is perhaps not surprising that care workers in the field of residential care are at risk for burnout (Barford & Whelton, 2010).

The important role that care workers play in the lives of YPIC is mentioned by Sulimani-Aidan (2017b), but literature that addresses how care workers see the futures of YPIC and CLs is notable by its scarcity. The care workers interviewed for Sulimani-Aidan’s (2017a) study described the resources CLs need in terms of expanding their formal (services and programmes) and informal (extended family members, friends and peers) possibilities, but this speaks of concrete possibilities rather than future selves. However, there is an encouraging mention of possible selves as care workers saw their role as supportive adults who “constantly encourage them [young adults] to dream and pursue their futures goals” (Sulimani-Aidan, 2017a, p. 150). The scant literature about care workers in the field of residential care is concerning, given the important role social workers and child and youth care workers play in the lives of YPIC and CLs as they transition out of care (Sulimani-Aidan, 2014), and points to an area in need of further research.

2.11. Conclusion

The focus of this study is CLs, and their resilience and possible selves, and this chapter has provided a discussion of the literature that pertains to these areas. As CLs are either adolescents or emerging adults, the chapter opened by discussing the general concept of adolescence and adolescence in
different cultural contexts, before focussing on the literature that speaks to what it means to be an adolescent in an African context, followed by adolescence in South Africa. Adolescents have often been at the forefront of political activism, and this is particularly true in South Africa, therefore a discussion of this aspect of adolescence in the South African context was presented. Adolescence is a time of identity development, so this aspect of the literature was included, incorporating a discussion of aspects of identity development particular to YPIC. This was followed by a presentation of literature that examines how the brain develops in adolescence as well as the nature and impact of Complex Developmental Trauma. This section of the chapter concluded with a discussion of the theory of emerging adulthood.

The next section of the literature review looked at various aspects of the transition from care, including pathways out of care and how YP are prepared for discharge from the statutory system. The educational, employment and housing outcomes for CLs were discussed as exemplars of a wider range of independent living outcomes, as well as the provision of ILPs. The emergence of ILPs internationally highlights the lack of post-discharge services to South African CLs, and the development of international policy and legislation in respect of CLs was presented and contrasted to the current situation in South Africa.

The theoretical frameworks for this study are resilience and possible selves theories, and the chapter presented these theories, unpacking their core concepts, discussing their application and presenting the critiques of each theory. The final section of the literature review discussed literature pertaining to social workers and child and youth care workers. The next chapter will present a detailed discussion of the methodology employed in the implementation of this study.
Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

Chapter three describes the research approach, design and methodology used in this study. The chapter opens with a discussion of the qualitative research approach and its appropriateness to this study. The research design, sampling methods, research instruments, data collection and analysis are described, and my decisions in these regards are supported with theory. The measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study are also described, as well as strategies used to ensure that ethical considerations and requirements were met.

3.2. Research approach

The study adopted a qualitative approach. According to Merriam (2009, p. 2), qualitative research “focuses on meaning in context”. The purpose of this study was not to examine cause and effect, or provide statistical analysis of various phenomena, but to examine the lived experiences of a particular group of people in a particular context, thus a qualitative approach was appropriate to this study. According to Hazzan and Nutov (2014) and Attride-Stirling (2001), qualitative research has become increasingly accepted, not only in social science studies, but also in other fields, as appropriate for studies that seek to understand the behaviour of people, and their behaviour in social, cultural and economic contexts. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings and seek to understand the object of their study in greater depth (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The qualitative research approach is used when the researcher wishes to study aspects of the human condition, such as feelings, processes, attitudes, environments and situations, and examine them from various perspectives (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). Thus, it may be said that qualitative research locates the researcher in the world of his or her participants, and consists of practices that endeavour to make that world visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Unfortunately, qualitative research is sometimes regarded as ‘soft science’ and the output of such studies ‘unscientific’ as researchers have no definitive way of verifying the statements of truth they make (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). However, this critique, which is located in a positivist paradigm, fails to recognize that the purpose of the qualitative approach is not to arrive at a definitive truth. Rather, qualitative research recognizes and embraces the understanding that there is no one universal truth, and that truth and meaning are co-constructed as individuals engage with their environment and the people who share it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).
Qualitative research is considered particularly suited to social work studies, as it connects with the fundamental social work values of the dignity and worth of the individual and the delivery of quality and competent service (Gilgun & Abrams, 2002). Social workers typically work with the marginalised and disenfranchised, and the scant literature in the field of care and care leaving in South Africa is indicative of the extent to which YPIC are overlooked. Thus a qualititative approach was appropriate in this study as it brought to the fore the lived experiences and voices of the participants, to an arena in which decisions are often made about them instead of with them (Gilgun & Abrams, 2002).

Providing YPIC an opportunity to use their voice is of particular relevance to this study, as there is a notable absence of the voice of children and YP in research literature (Gilbertson & Barber, 2002; Kendrick, Steckley, & Lerpiniere, 2008). Recent years have seen a “paradigmatic shift” (McCarry, 2012, p. 56) in social science research with regard to child participation. The view of children as vulnerable and passive recipients of services has evolved to an understanding of young people as empowered and competent social actors (Franks, 2011; Sime, 2008). This development has its roots in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989, article 12), which specifies the right of the child to give her or his view and have it taken into consideration about matters and decisions that have a direct impact on the child. This right is reflected in South African legislation, such as the Children’s Act (RSA, 2005) and the Children’s Amendment Act (RSA, 2007), both of which make provision for the voice of the child to be heard and considered.

However, despite convincing arguments for the participation of children and YP, and a substantial body of literature that offers methodological discussion and gives significant weight to the participation of children and YP, more is known about the residential care system than the experiences of those who live within it (Emond, 2003; Southwell & Fraser, 2010). This is unfortunate, and may be seen as a contributing factor in the continued provision of ineffective and inefficient services to YPIC (Roose & De Bie, 2003). Roose and De Bie (2003) state that the care available must be beneficial to those who receive it. Consultation with YP provides a basis for accountability and increases the likelihood of effective service provision, yet the literature reflects that consultation is absent, or the views of YP ignored (Gilbertson & Barber, 2002; Moses, 2008). This is a serious omission, as children and YPIC have a critical and unique perspective to offer with regard to the services provided to them (Southwell & Fraser, 2010).

There are a number of challenges inherent to working with the population of YPIC that may explain the absence of their voice in the literature. Sime (2008), for example, discusses the challenges faced when attempting to obtain parental consent to carry out research involving minors. The requirement
of parental consent serves to both silence and disempower YP in the research process (Fargas-Malet, McSherry, Larkin, & Robinson, 2010). Parental consent is considered first, and the consent of YP sought only after permission from a “more competent” (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010, p. 177) parent has been granted. The actual participant in the research process gives her or his assent, rather than consent, thus making the YP ‘passive’ in the consent process (Murray, 2005). Gilbertson and Barber (2002) note that negotiations with various other role players, such as legal representatives, agency managers, social workers and case workers, in order to obtain permission to enter the research site and gain access to the YP may explain the absence of the voice of YP in the literature. Kendrick et al. (2008) comment that the gatekeepers’ ability to block YPs’ participation constrains them from decision making and involvement in research, and thus serves to silence them.

It may be argued that the role of social service practitioners in marginalising the participation of YPIC stems from their social work training. Currently, social work training at undergraduate level is based on the premise that general skills and competencies can be transferred across practice settings (Smith, 2003). Adopting an ‘expert’ position and relying on a generalised repertoire of strategies and interventions hamper meaningful participation, and YP comment that the problem formulation made by their care workers differed significantly to their own (Roose & De Bie, 2003; Smith, 2003). Roose and De Bie (2003, p. 480) argue for a shift towards “participative care”, which calls for reflection, creativity and an understanding and integration of the concept that quality of care is context and client specific.

A further explanation for the absence of meaningful participation by YP may be found in power disparities, informed by cultural norms and paternal approaches to welfare interventions, which reinforce the power inequalities between adults and YP (Moses, 2008). In the South African context, obedience is valued, respect for adults emphasized, children and YP are seldom involved in decision making processes and their competencies are undervalued (Moses, 2008). The result is that YP are seldom given the opportunity to express their views to adults and are excluded from decisions regarding service design and implementation (Moses, 2008). This calls for a shift in understanding the value of working with YP and the adoption of collaborative processes (Roose & De Bie, 2003).

A move towards collaboration with YP contributes to positive and affirming interactions that provide YP with opportunities to feel in control of their lives (Ungar, 2004). “Collective conversations” (Ungar, 2004, p. 32) value the YP’s lived experience and create openings for describing their lives in positive terms. These are powerful opportunities, which can result in YP who feel “confident, powerful and mentally healthy” (Ungar, 2004, p. 26), which is particularly relevant given the negative outcomes associated with the care context and care leaving (Dixon, 2008; Stein, 2008).
3.3. Research design

Locating the study within a qualitative approach informs the choice of research design. Research design is the “blueprint” for the intended study, and the choice of design impacts on the methodology used to collect and analyse the data (Babbie & Mouton, 2010, p. 74). There are five strategies of inquiry that may be used to design qualitative research, and the choice of strategy is influenced by the purpose of the study (Merriam, 2009). According to (Creswell, 2009) the five strategies are biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study.

I initially considered using grounded theory (GT) as the design for this study. GT was developed by Glasser and Strauss (1967) as a reaction to the extreme positivism that dominated the field of social science research. GT disputed that the purpose of all research was to test existing theory and uncover pre-existing and all-encompassing explanations for human behaviour (Birks & Mills, 2011; Suddaby, 2006). Glasser and Strauss (1967) proposed GT as a practical method for conducting research that focusses on interpretive processes, by analysing how social actors produce meaning and concepts in real settings (Suddaby, 2006). GT studies social interactions and the meanings people ascribe to and derive from these interactions, and creates new theory of interrelated concepts, rather than testing existing theory (Hussein, Hirst, Salyers, & Osuji, 2014; Sbaraini, Carter, Evans, & Blinkhorn, 2011). GT has become a popular methodology across various disciplines in health and social sciences, and offers a practical and flexible approach to interpret complex social phenomena (Charmaz, 2006; Hussein et al., 2014). Hussein et al. (2014) argue that GT has a number of advantages to the researcher as it fosters creativity, has an intuitive appeal, contributes to rigour through its systematic approach, and generates rich, in-depth data.

However, the central concept of GT is to generate theory that is ‘grounded’ in the data itself. As the purpose of this study was to describe the experiences and feelings of YP as they prepare to exit the care system and the views and experiences of their care givers, it is not in keeping with the aim of GT; therefore a phenomenological design was selected.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2010, p. 33) “phenomenology has traditionally been associated with the qualitative approach”. Phenomenology as a philosophy has impacted on all qualitative research, but phenomenology is also a form of qualitative research and has its own focus and methodological strategies (Fouché, 2005; Merriam, 2009). The aim of the phenomenological design is to understand and interpret the meaning that people give to their lived experiences (Creswell, 2007), which is in keeping with the purpose of this study (Fouché, 2005; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008). The researcher attempts to put him or herself in the shoes of the participant, and to convey the findings in such a way that the reader comes away with a better understanding of the participants’ experience.
To this end, participants are selected based on the similarity of their experience or context, the interviewer enters the participants' life world, multiple participants are interviewed, and the researcher may make use of multiple interviews with the participants (Fouché, 2005; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Further, a phenomenological design influences the manner in which the data is collected and analysed. These methodological issues are discussed in sections 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 below.

### 3.4. Theoretical frameworks

The theoretical frameworks used in this study were resilience theory (Garmezy, 1991; Masten et al., 1999) and the theory of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). These theories have been discussed in detail in chapter 2, but a brief overview of the theories and their relevance to the methodology follows.

Resilience theory emerged in the 1970’s with the work of Garmezy (1971) at the forefront of the field (Rutter, 2012). In the ensuing decades, resilience theory has undergone considerable evolution, moving from being understood as an inherent ruggedness or invulnerability, to a more multifaceted and dynamic understanding of the interplay between the individual and his/her social and cultural environments, and how resilience is developed as he/she interfaces and engages with people and systems (Herrmann et al., 2011; McElwee, 2007; Wright et al., 2013). Resilience is defined as showing positive adaptation in the face of risk or adversity (Masten & Obradovic, 2006), and is thus suited to the study of YPIC, who by definition, have experienced risk or adversity. Resilience theory was considered an appropriate lens through which to explore the experiences of the YP as they prepared to leave the care system, because YP in this phase of life move between multiple spheres, and may engage with a number of different role players, which may or may not contribute to the development of resilience. Resilience theory provides scope for the identification of positive, resilience-enhancing factors in a population that is associated with predominantly negative outcomes.

The life-mapping activity and attendant semi-structured interview schedule were designed using resilience theory as the informing framework. The life-mapping activity required that the participants think about themselves at three separate points in the future and identify their aspirations and goals at each point. The discussion questions were aimed at identifying personal, relational and structural resources that could be accessed to promote resilience. Thus the participants were invited to discuss their strengths, times when they had overcome challenges, and times they had experienced success, as well as people that support them and structural resources available to them, and how these might be of value or use to them as they journey toward their goals, all of which contribute to the
development of resilience (Gilligan, 2008; Stein, 2008; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). This activity is discussed in more detail in section 3.6.1.

The second theoretical framework for this study was Markus and Nurius’ (1986) theory of possible selves. The theory of possible selves argues that one’s hoped for, expected and feared possible selves are motivators of behaviour, either towards a hoped for or expected possible self, or away from a feared self. The exploration of different selves is an integral aspect of adolescence, but Sulimani-Aidan and Rami (2011) suggest that future expectations are particularly important at points of crisis or transition. It may be argued that CL’s are adolescents at a crisis point that involves transition as they exit the care system and begin their journey into independent living largely unsupported (Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006). Thus possible selves theory provided a framework for CL’s to explore their possible selves and consider how these may shape and be shaped by their behaviours.

The use of the ‘possible-me tree’ as a method of data collection was informed by Hock’s (2003) model, and is discussed in more detail in section 3.6.2. The discussion of the participant’s possible-me trees also incorporated aspects of resilience theory, to consolidate the resilience factors identified in the Life-mapping activity.

3.5. Populations, sampling and recruitment

According to Hennink (2007) the study population is determined by the purpose of the research, and a clear definition of the study population is required before sampling and recruitment decisions can be made (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). The populations, sampling method and criteria and recruitment strategies are discussed below.

3.5.1. Prior social work service contact with the populations

I practiced as a statutory social worker between 2008 and 2010 in the city of East London. The small number of CYCCs in East London meant that placements for YP were sometimes secured in the nearby city of Port Elizabeth. Thus it was inevitable that I conducted some of this research in settings where I had previously engaged with a CYCC or SWs. This could have impacted on my role as researcher. Specifically, I was the external SW for two YP placed at one of the CYCCs in this study, and one YP placed at another. However, I had had no contact with these CYCCs for the five years between 2010 and 2015, and the YP concerned had all either been discharged from the system, or returned to parental care in that time. Two of the SWs I had had dealings with during the course of my career as a statutory SW were still at the same CYCCs and participated in this study. The other SWs who participated were not known to me. The CYCWs who took part were not known to me.
3.5.2. Population and sampling of research sites

The sites for this research were CYCCs located in the Port Elizabeth area. For the purposes of this study, a CYCC was defined as facility that provides residential care in terms of chapter 13, Section 191 of the Children’s Amendment Act (41 of 2007). Thus, criteria for inclusion in the study included registration with the Department of Social Development as a CYCC, the provision of residential care for more than six children outside the family environment, and the provision of therapeutic services. Although places of safety, partial care facilities and drop in centres are described in the relevant legislation as CYCCs, these were not included for selection, as they provide short term care only (RSA, 2007, chapter 13, section 191). Boarding schools and school hostels were also excluded as they do not require a committal of YP in terms of the Children’s Act (RSA, 2005).

Initially, four registered CYCCs in the Port Elizabeth area that fulfilled the definition above were identified. However, during the course of the first round of interviews I became aware of fifth registered CYCC in the Port Elizabeth area. Thus there was a total population of five CYCCs that met the criteria for inclusion in this study.

All five sites were invited to participate in the research, four of which agreed. The remaining site was in a period of transition with regard to management, and in spite of repeated attempts, I was unable to contact anyone who could give permission for me to enter the site. Consequently, while it was my intention to study the entire population of sites, I had to use an availability sample of four of the five sites.

3.5.3. Population of participants

The study drew samples from three separate populations of participants within each of the four sites; namely YPIC, SWs, and CYCWs.

A young person in care was defined as a child who had been committed to a CYCC by order of a Children’s Court in terms of Section 155 of the Children’s Act (RSA, 2005). The population comprised of all children and YP placed in a registered CYCC in terms of the Children’s Act (RSA, 2005).

The second and third populations comprised of SWs and CYCWs. These two populations are closely related, but distinct in terms of their connection with the YPIC, qualifications and scope of practice. Therefore, it can be surmised that their experience of and approach to children in care and the interventions they provide will be different, as discussed below.
The population of SWs was defined as individuals employed by the CYCC, who hold a four-year professional qualification, and who are registered as social workers with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). The SW in a CYCC setting has administrative and therapeutic functions. The SW liaises with teachers and external SWs, and has input into the recommendations made in terms of renewal orders. He or she often has daily contact with YPIC, but this is limited in time, and the purpose is therapeutic, disciplinary or consultative. It is my experience that the nature of the relationship is frequently affectionate and connected, but there is a difference in the relationship between YP and SW and YP and CYCW, particularly in the larger CYCCs.

The population of CYCWs was defined as individuals who are employed by the CYCC, who have the required certificate qualification and who are registered with the SACSSP as CYCWs. The CYCCs in this study adopt the house parent model of care, which means that one house will be managed by the same team of staff (Jones, Lansdsverk, & Roberts, 2007). The house is usually comprised of children of varying ages to create an environment that reflects a family setting of parents and siblings. The CYCW has a more parental role with YPIC, as he or she provides the ongoing daily care and discipline of the child or YP. Thus the CYCW is in a position to have a deeper, more intimate relationship and connection with YPIC.

### 3.5.4. Sampling of participants

Sampling decisions are informed by a number of factors, and the use of samples is driven by several practical considerations identified by Flick (2009), Patton (2002), and Silverman (2011). A complete coverage of a population may not be feasible due to the sheer size of the population. Using samples addresses issues of time and labour, as studies based on samples are less time consuming and require less labour. Using samples also addresses general economic concerns, as a sample population requires less materials, travel and accommodation expenses. Further, the use of relatively small units results in more detailed information and a higher level of accuracy (Flick, 2009; Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2011).

However, sampling decisions must also be made with careful consideration of their potential to construct the reality under study in a particular way (Flick, 2009). Flick (2009) asserts that sampling decisions determine what information is brought to the fore or phased out, and what data becomes empirical material in the form of text. Thus sampling decisions are not made in isolation, and are an integral part of the research design, informed by the overall aim of the study; either to cover as wide a field as possible, or to provide analyses that are as deep as possible (Flick, 2009).
Qualitative studies typically focus in depth on relatively small samples (Patton, 2002). The intent of qualitative sampling is not to generalize results from a random sample to a wider population, or to control for selection bias, but to select information-rich cases to be studied in depth. It is from such samples that the researcher learns a great deal about matters of critical importance to the purpose of the study, hence the term ‘purposive sampling’, also known as judgement or purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). Small samples are in keeping with a phenomenological design. Starks and Trinidad (2007) maintain that a phenomenological studies usually make use of small samples chosen purposively in order to bring participants’ shared experiences to the fore.

Purposive sampling aims to select sources of information that will add meaning to the study and allows selection of cases that are typical of the population to be studied, which is in keeping with a phenomenological design (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Creswell, 2009; Fossey et al., 2002). There are various types of purposive samples: Yates (2004) identifies four, Patton (2002) notes seventeen, and Emmel (2013) makes reference to fourteen, commenting that the methods may be combined to obtain a sample that will best address the aim of the research. I chose to use homogenous sampling. Homogenous sampling is a strategy with the purpose of investigating a group or sub-group in considerable detail (Emmel, 2013; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Homogenous sampling defines the characteristics that describe a particular group and selects participants accordingly (Emmel, 2013; Patton, 2002). Homogenous groups (or samples) are comparable in significant aspects related to the research question and have similar backgrounds (Flick, 2009). Further, according to Patton (2002), homogenous groups are typically used when conducting focus group interviews, as focus groups bring together individuals of similar backgrounds and experience to participate in group discussions of matters that affect or concern them (Patton, 2002). Focus groups was one method of data collection used in this study.

I intended to use primary selection sampling of participants. Primary selection makes use of participants who have the necessary knowledge and experience of the topic of the study in order to be able to engage in discussion, and the ability to reflect and communicate their views (Flick, 2009). Flick (2009) maintains that it is preferable to use primary selection. But in case there were too few participants who met the primary criteria, I planned to use secondary selection (Flick, 2009). These participants may not have met the criteria with regard to knowledge or experience, but were willing to take part in the study as they felt they had a meaningful contribution to make. However, a sufficient number of participants who met the criteria were recruited, making secondary selection unnecessary.

The criteria used for the selection of participants are detailed below.
3.5.4.1. Sampling of YPIC

Three YPIC were purposively sampled from each CYCC, making a total of 12 participants. Participants had to be aged 17 or 18. The reason for using this age group was that these young people stand on the dual brinks of adulthood and exiting the statutory system. Participants had to have been in residential care for a period of not less than 24 months. This time frame was chosen as it was considered that two years is an adequate time for participants to have adjusted to life in a CYCC and to have been exposed to group programmes, established links with social capital and had discussions about career planning and exit strategies. Thus participants would be in a position to comment about the service provision they had received and their preparedness for exiting the system. Table 3.1 presents a summary of the sampling criteria for YPIC.

Table 3.1 Summary of sampling criteria used for selection of YPIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Duration of placement at CYCC</th>
<th>Number of participants per site</th>
<th>Total YPIC Participants per site x 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 – 18 years</td>
<td>2 or more years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 15 potential participants who met the sampling criteria were identified and were invited to take part in the study and 12 YP agreed to be interviewed. The number of participants from each CYCC is as follows: three YP from CYCC1; five YP from CYCC2; three YP from CYCC3; and one YP from CYCC4. One YP (from CYCC3) participated in the life-mapping and possible selves interviews, but declined to attend the mini-focus group. However, the data from the two interviews that this participant completed has been included in the analysis and findings.

The uneven distribution of the participants may be attributed to the relative sizes of the CYCCs from which the samples were drawn. The largest CYCC was CYCC3, and CYCC4 was the smallest. If this were a quantitative study, this uneven distribution might impact on the study’s generalizability. However, qualitative research does not aim to secure results that are generalizable; the focus of qualitative work, particularly when employing a phenomenological design, is to explore the lived experiences of participants (Creswell, 2009; Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). Further, Moriarty (2011) suggests that one of the advantages of qualitative research is its flexibility, arguing that participants can be ‘added’ to qualitative research if they meet the purposive sampling criteria. Thus, the small difference in numbers of YP participants in this sample may be regarded as adding diversity and depth to the findings of the research.
3.5.4.2. Sampling of social workers

Four social workers, one from each site, were recruited from the population described in section 3.5.3. Participants had to have had a minimum of five years’ experience in the field of child and youth care work and been employed at the CYCC for a minimum of two years to be included in the study. These criteria were set to ensure that the professional participants had experience in the field of residential care, as well as knowledge of and a relationship with the YP included in the study. A summary of the sampling criteria for this population is found in Table 3.2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification/registration</th>
<th>Experience in the field of CYC</th>
<th>Experience at site selected</th>
<th>Number of participants per site</th>
<th>Total = Participants per site X 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 year professional qualification Registration with SACSSP in the relevant category</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of five SWs were identified and approached to participate in the study. Initially all five SWs agreed to participate, but the scheduling of the mini-focus group coincided with a continuing professional development presentation, and one SW opted to attend that instead of the mini-focus group. Efforts to reschedule the mini-focus group were unsuccessful; the SW concerned was invited to be interviewed with the SW from the fourth CYCC when I returned to Port Elizabeth for a second round of data collection, but she declined.

Therefore, three of the four SWs participated in the mini-focus group during the first round of data collection. One SW (Lee) was interviewed individually during the second round of data collection. Lee was recruited from CYCC4, and at the time the mini focus group was held, the recruitment processes for CYCC4 had not been completed.

3.5.4.3. Sampling of CYCWs

It was proposed that two CYCWs from each site would be recruited, making a total sample of eight participants. Criteria for inclusion were the same as for the previous sample. Table 3 below provides a summary of the sampling criteria for this population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification/registration</th>
<th>Experience in the field of CYC</th>
<th>Experience at the site selected</th>
<th>Number of participants per site</th>
<th>Total = participants per site X 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate qualification Registration with SACSSP as CYCW</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A total of nine CYCWs took part in the study: two each from CYCC1 and CYCC3, four from CYCC2, and one from CYCC4. One male CYCW who met the sampling criteria had indicated that he would like to take part in the study. However, he was unable to attend the focus group as it coincided with his week off. As he lived a considerable distance from the town where the interviews were being held, he was unable to participate. As he was the only male CYCW/SW, I was eager to have him participate, and attempted to contact him to schedule an appointment for an interview, and again when I returned for the second round of data collection, but he declined on both occasions.

The uneven distribution of CYCC participants can be attributed to differences in staffing at the various CYCCs. CYCC1 is a medium size facility and a result of two participants is in keeping with the number of available CYCWs with the necessary experience from that organisation. CYCC3 is a larger facility, but the staff compliment consisted of mostly recently qualified CYCWs, or CYCWs without the requisite experience to meet the sampling criteria. CYCC2 yielded the most participants as their staff component was made up of CYCWs who had a long employment history with the organization. CYCC4 is a very small facility and only one of the limited number of CYCWs employed there met the criteria for inclusion in this study.

As discussed in section 3.5.4.1 above, the uneven distribution of participants would be significant if this were a quantitative study. However, the aim of qualitative research is to explore lived experience, and it may be argued that the differences in numbers add to the diversity of the views and experiences that were collected and analysed to arrive at the findings of this research.

3.5.4.4. Recruitment, entry to research sites and access to participants

Permission to enter the research sites and access the proposed populations was secured from the director of each of the CYCCs identified for this study. An initial approach was made in writing (Annexure 1), followed up telephonically to set up an appointment to discuss the study in person. In addition to interviewing YPIC, interviews with social workers and CYCWs were proposed.

Once permission had been granted by the directors of the CYCC to access the sites, I travelled to Port Elizabeth to explain the nature and purpose of the research to the various population groups in person. Meetings were held with prospective participants from the SW and CYCW populations. Individuals who expressed an interest in taking part in the study were given a letter providing details of the study to take away and consider (Annexures 2 & 3). I followed up with any interested individuals during a return visit to Port Elizabeth.

YP were approached differently. I forwarded an information leaflet (Annexure 4) to the SWs at the CYCCs to pass on to all YP who met the sampling criteria. I travelled to Port Elizabeth two weeks
later to meet with any YP who had indicated willingness to participate. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce myself, explain the nature and purpose of the study and the extent of their participation, and discuss confidentiality. The information leaflet and a letter (Annexure 5) were forwarded to the parents of consenting YP, which informed them of the research project and asking them to complete and return the form attached if they did not consent to their child taking part. I allowed a period of two weeks for forms to be returned, and then returned to Port Elizabeth and met with the YP concerned to confirm their participation, complete the consent forms and begin data collection.

No parental forms were returned denying consent. One parent did not understand the content of the letter and visited the CYCC to ask the SW about it. This was the first time in the YP’s eight year stay at the CYCC that there had been direct contact with the parent. I was informed that this had been a productive meeting for the SW, as she was able to obtain a current address and liaise with the external SW with regard to home visits and exit planning.

3.6. Methods of data collection

According to Creswell (2007) and Starks and Trinidad (2007) data collection in research employing a phenomenological design primarily makes use of in-depth interviews using a semi-structured format. Multiple interviews are also appropriate within phenomenological design, and focus groups and creative techniques may also utilized (Creswell, 2007). In this study data were collected in different ways across the different groups of participants. Data from YP were collected over a course of three interviews, utilizing creative methods and semi-structured interview schedules. Data from the SWs and, CYCWs were collected in focus groups using a question guide to facilitate discussions.

Semi-structured interviews provide a degree of flexibility in the interview dialogue, whereby the interview questions may be adapted to the individual participant (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The researcher can respond in the moment and explore interesting or significant topics as they arise (Merriam, 2009). This flexibility allows the researcher to enter more fully into the world of the participant, which is in keeping with the intent and design of this study, particularly with regard to the YPIC.

Creative techniques are gaining popularity as a credible method of collecting data in social science research, and have a number of characteristics that made the use of them relevant to this study (Bagnoli, 2009; Griffiths, Giarchi, Carr, Jones, & Horsham, 2007; Rodgers, 2006; Worth, 2011). Creative activities generate opportunity for building rapport and trust, which are critical factors in obtaining sound data from an adolescent population (Nolas, 2011). Further, the process of producing
a visual representation of what are often vague concepts, allows for ideas to coalesce and become more defined, and the expression of what may be difficult to say out loud (Bagnoli, 2009; Worth, 2011).

Visual diagramming is one term used for a range of methods used to gather information in a research context (Winton, 2007). The use of diagrams to collect information is not new to social work practice. Time lines, ecomaps, genograms and social support diagrams are examples of popular and well established techniques in practice settings that translate well to the research context (Jackson, 2013). Winton (2007) argues that visual diagramming brings increased flexibility and versatility to qualitative research, and serves to re-position the researcher as participant; one who “expects to be taught rather than teach” (Winton, 2007, p. 499). This is of particular relevance in this study, as the foundation of my thinking and practice is that YPIC are competent social actors with valuable contributions to make.

One of the major advantages of employing visual diagramming techniques is that they allow participants a measure of active control over the ensuing discussion (Kesby, 2000; Winton, 2007). These techniques also provide participants with alternate methods of communication which may encourage them to construct and reconstruct the meaning of their lives, and to articulate concepts and ideas that represent their own priorities (Jackson, 2013; Kesby, 2000; Winton, 2007). Visual diagramming methods present ‘marginalized’ groups with a powerful means to communicate their ideas to those who have power (real or perceived) over their lives, and create an environment in which negotiation of social behaviours becomes possible (Kesby, 2000; Winton, 2007). These concepts are crucial to YPIC, as the literature shows that they are frequently excluded from discussions and decision making processes, and behavioural coping strategies are often labelled as ‘problem behaviours’ (Freundlich et al., 2007; Gilgun & Abrams, 2002; Ungar, 2004).

Visual diagramming techniques have their origin in participatory methodology (Kesby, 2000; Worth, 2011). The term ‘visual diagramming’ was chosen with care from the literature, as this study cannot be considered truly participatory because I retained overall control of the research process and agenda (Kesby, 2000). Bagnoli (2009) presents an elegant argument for the use of visual techniques in research with children and YP, and their inclusion in this study was founded on their value as an innovative method of data collection that allows participants a measure of control over the interview process, and ownership of the finished product (Griffiths et al., 2007).
3.6.1. Interview 1 with YP: Life-map

The first interview with the YP comprised a life-mapping activity. Life-maps are in keeping with creative research methods in which the verbal nature of interviews is enriched by the innovative use of visual techniques (Worth, 2011). Worth (2011) positions life-maps as participatory diagrams, and comments that they are particularly useful when working with YP and in transition research.

The participants were requested to construct a life-map detailing how they envisioned their lives at three distinct points: immediately after discharge from the care system, three years following discharge and five years after discharge (Annexure 6). The use of these fixed points in time was informed by Thompson and Holland’s (2002) “Imagined Adulthood” study, as was the use of an interview schedule to guide the ensuing discussion. The participants were given no further direction beyond the three fixed points in time, and were provided with basic drawing tools, viz. paper, pencils and coloured pens. No restrictions were placed on the style or structure of the map other than those intrinsic in the materials provided (Griffiths et al., 2007). The use of broad instructions and minimal materials was based on Bagnoli’s (2009) intent of enabling participants to reflect, process and structure the task in their own ways. When planning this activity at the proposal stage of this study, I had intended to provide additional materials to YP, such as magazines or art/craft supplies. However, after studying the literature and reflecting on work I do at a CYCC in East London, I felt that these might produce a collage of desires prompted by the images in the materials, rather than a genuine reflection of the YPs’ thoughts. I therefore decided to keep the materials provided to a minimum, in keeping with Bagnoli’s (2009) recommendation.

For the life-mapping and possible-self interviews, I met with the YPIC at the CYCC where they are placed, having secured a venue that was equipped with a desk and chairs, and provided for confidentiality. Each YP was offered something to eat and drink, and I spent some time in general conversation with each participant as a ‘warm up’ to the actual interview. The informed consent form was provided and I discussed it with the YP clause by clause. The YP were encouraged to ask questions before they signed the document. (Annexure 7). I also secured consent to record the interviews (Annexure 8). At the outset of each interview, I let the participants know that I know I speak quite rapidly, and I have an accent which is sometimes difficult to follow. I went on to say that if at any point they struggled to understand my meaning, or if I used a word they did not understand, they could feel free to stop me and ask me to repeat myself, re-word the sentence or explain the meaning of a word. In my practice I have found this to be a useful strategy, as it places the responsibility for any misunderstanding with me, and allows people to feel more comfortable about asking for clarification.
After the initial ‘warm up’ period, I explained the activity to the participants and provided them with a range of coloured pages, pens, pencils, crayons and highlighters to use. The participants were informed that they could take their time completing the activity. This was to allow them the opportunity to engage with and process the concepts and the activity at a deep level. Once the participants had finished, I moved to sit next to them and invited them to tell me about what they had drawn or produced. I allowed them to talk me through their life-map without interruption. Once they had finished talking about their life-map, I went back to the activity and clarified any areas that were unclear to me, or that had been passed over by the YP as they were telling me their story.

When this process was complete I began using the interview schedule to inform the discussion further. I used the interview schedule to ensure that the same basic information was obtained from all participants, but within this structure I used probing questions, statements and non-verbal cues to elicit more in-depth data from the participants. For example, if, in reply to the question, “Who might help you with this?” the participant replied, “My aunt”, I would respond with the comment, “Okay. This is the first time you’ve mentioned your aunt. Tell me about her”. At the close of the interview I summarized the content of the drawing and of the conversation, and asked each participant if there was anything they would like to add (relevant to the activity) before we ended the interview. I also asked the participants to evaluate their experience of taking part in the activity. An example of a completed life-map can be found in Annexure 9.

The interviews were planned to be a minimum of 60 minutes each in duration. However, it proved challenging to schedule and conduct the interviews. On several occasions I arrived to conduct an interview to find that the YP had not yet returned from school, was busy with homework or extra tuition, or had simply forgotten and gone out. Further, I was only able to interview the YP between 3:30 (when they returned from school) and 6pm (when supper is served). The delays in finding the participants and the resultant time constraints served to reduce the time available for interviews. Consequently, most of the interviews were 45 minutes in length (not including time spent on the activity). The shortest interview was 30 minutes and the longest 90 minutes.

I also experienced some difficulty with the ability of some of the participants ability to understand the questions, in part because five of the YP were Afrikaans speaking (although attending English-medium schools), but also because I had not anticipated that several of the YP would be in vocational schools, suggesting a degree of cognitive limitation. It was evident that these YP felt they were being cross-examined and were uncomfortable (Annexure 10). I decided to open the interviews differently, and incorporate some of the questions in the revised opening. For example, questions about things the YP were good at were not eliciting any response. However, when the question was worked into
the following opening statement, “Before we begin and you tell me about your life-map/possible-me tree, I’d like to know a little bit more about you. If I had to ask your friends/teachers/SW/CYCW, about you, what would they say?” the YP were more relaxed and this conversation yielded better data about their strengths and challenges, resources and supports, than by simply asking, “What do you think you are good at?”. Examples of the revised approach are found in Annexure 11.

At the end of each day I listened to the recordings and noted any areas that I felt had been missed, or could have been developed further. I made notes as to how I could develop these areas further, and revisited these areas prior to commencing the next interview with the YP (the possible-me tree interview). For example, in his life-mapping interview, Jean-Paul mentioned joining the Navy as a passing comment. I noticed this while reviewing the recording, and made a note to raise the subject and explore it in more depth with him during the possible-me tree interview. I introduced these areas to be revisited by saying “As I was listening to the recording of our last session I noticed that you mentioned joining the Navy (to use the example above). We didn’t talk much about it at the time, but I’m interested to know more. Before we start today’s activity, please would you tell me about your idea of joining the Navy?” An example of the revised approach to the possible-me tree is found in Annexure 14.

Two of the research objectives were addressed using the life-mapping activity: providing YPIC an opportunity to describe and discuss their view of their futures, and identifying resilience factors. The questions on the interview schedule (Annexure 6) were designed to identify resilience factors and elicit information from YP about their future plans. Although I used the interview schedule to guide the interview process, I attempted to facilitate deeper exploration of different areas that appeared to be specific to the participant concerned.

3.6.2. Interview 2 with YP: Possible-me tree

The possible me-tree activity is a widely used technique in classroom and youth development settings (Kerpleman, 2007). The purpose of the activity is to facilitate self-awareness in YP of their hopes, expectations, fears, the strengths they might have and the challenges they might face. The activity is divided into five steps and is based on the model found in Hock (2003). The worksheet utilized can be found in Annexure 13.

It has been argued in Chapter 2 that possible selves are resilience factors, thus the inclusion of this activity was in order to meet to the research objectives of allowing YPIC to discuss their view of their futures and to identify resilience factors. The questions on the original interview schedule (Annexure 12) were informed by Hock, Deshler and Schumaker’s (2006) model. The participants were asked
discovering questions, such as, “What are you good at that might help you to achieve this possible-self?” and thinking questions, for example, “What words best describe you as…?” or “What do you hope/expect/fear as…?” (Hock et al., 2006).

The process of the second interview was similar to the first. As the interviews were held at weekly intervals, I included a brief ‘warm up’ period to reconnect after the break since the last interview, before revisiting the informed consent and ensuring that the YP were still willing to participate and did not have any questions. I then addressed any areas of the previous interview that I had noted as needing further exploration. Then the second activity, the possible-me tree was explained and the YP was invited to draw their possible-me tree. An exploration of the drawing was facilitated by using the revised semi-structured interview schedule (Annexure 14). An example of a completed possible-me tree and worksheets can be found in Annexure 15.

3.6.3. Focus groups with YP

Focus groups were used to gather data from YPIC in a third session of data collection. The dynamic processes of focus groups mean that each session may be regarded as an individual research project, and based on the content, it is possible to adapt questions from one group to the next (Greenbaum, 1998). This means that learning from previous sessions can be used to improve the output from later sessions (Greenbaum, 1998).

Focus groups have been used for a long time in market research, but have only comparatively recently gained popularity in social science research (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Llamputtong, 2011; Wilkinson, 2008). Essentially, focus groups are group discussions that explore specific issues (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999). The group is focussed in that the activity of the group is concentrated on a collective activity such as viewing a video, or in the case of this study, discussing a set of questions relevant to a specific topic in a particular context (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999; Greeff, 2005). The ensuing group discussion is harnessed to generate data (Llamputtong, 2011). A focus group differs from an interview in that the participants are encouraged to talk to one another, and behave as they would when engaging in ordinary conversation. Thus, they might laugh, be silent, agree or disagree and select or interrupt speakers (Myers & Macnaghten, 1999). The process of presenting and defending their views, and challenging self and others may serve to clarify and consolidate opinions, and provide opportunities to consider viewpoints not previously known (McLaughlin, 2007). The strength of a focus group lies in its complexity and liveliness (Myers & Macnaghten, 1999).

Focus groups also differ from interviews as the moderator has limited control over the participants. A focus group provides an opportunity for participants to pursue their own priorities, on their own
terms; something that YPIC, in particular, are frequently denied (Myers & Macnaghten, 1999). YP seldom have much meaningful control over their environments, and if they are asked for feedback they may experience unpleasant consequences if their responses do not agree with adult ideas (Krueger & Casey, 2000). This is also true for CYCWs. Coughlan and Collins (2001) discuss the feelings of CYCWs who felt that their views were regarded as irrelevant, and that designing interventions was above them. Thus focus groups may be seen as a more participatory method of data collection that can serve to equalize power differentials (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Greenbaum (1998) identifies three types of focus groups. A full group comprises of 8-10 individuals, recruited for inclusion based on shared characteristics, and lasting no longer than 120 minutes. A mini-focus group has the same characteristics as a full group, but only uses 4-6 participants, while the third type of focus group, a telephone group, is a conference call (Greenbaum, 1998). Llamputtong (2011) further identifies two types of focus groups: pre-existing and constructed groups. Pre-existing groups consist of people who know one another, whereas constructed groups are comprised of individuals who have no prior connection to each other.

Mini-groups were selected for the YPIC for a number of reasons. Transporting twelve YP from four different CYCCs to one central location would have been challenging, as their varied after-school timetables would have presented considerable logistical problems. More significantly, the YP from the various CYCCs did not know one another, and there was a significant disparity in their levels of ability to engage with and discuss the concepts raised in the interviews. Thus, group dynamics were likely to be strained. Greeff (2005) observes that it is not always helpful to have strangers as participants in a focus group. Therefore it was decided to run mini-focus groups at each CYCC, made up of the participants from that centre. The mini-focus groups were held at the CYCC where the YP were resident.

However, logistics and sample size were not the primary considerations when deciding to use mini-focus groups. Mini-groups allow for the generation of richer data, as smaller groups provide opportunities for all participants to take part, and there is more time, per participant, available in a mini-group (Llamputtong, 2011). Pre-existing groups are useful in research involving specific groups of participants. When participants know one another they require less ‘warm up time’, and can prompt one another with shared experiences (Llamputtong, 2011).

The focus groups comprised the third session of data collection with the YP. Three separate mini-focus groups were conducted with the YP from CYCC one, two and three during the first round of data collection. The YP participant who was recruited from the fourth CYCC (Andrew) was interviewed individually during my return visit to Port Elizabeth, during a second round of data collection.
collection, where he was the only YP needing to participate in a third session of data collection. Andrew’s interview used the same process and question guide as I used for the mini-focus groups.

As part of the pre-group phase (Hennink, 2007) I provided pizza and cool drink for the participants. The YP were offered them the choice of eating before the discussion or afterwards. In all instances the YP preferred to keep the food and drink for afterwards. The administrative tasks of conducting a focus group were addressed during this phase (Hennink et al., 2011). The informed consent forms were revisited, and all of the YP confirmed that they were still willing to participate in the mini-focus group. The research was outlined, and their contribution acknowledged. The participants were informed that the mini-focus group was expected to last no longer than 90 minutes, and they were given the opportunity to ask any questions or withdraw before we commenced with the group discussion (Hennink et al., 2011; Llamputtong, 2011).

The mini-focus group discussions were conducted using a “question guide” (Llamputtong, 2011, p. 75). The question guide initiates and facilitates the group discussion by asking questions that initiate, facilitate transition, focus, summarise and conclude the discussion (Llamputtong, 2011). I opened the discussion by asking the YP, “As you are about to leave the children’s home, how do you see your futures?” This was followed by transition questions, for example “What are you most looking forward to as you leave the children’s home?” The focus group topics were informed by research objective one: describe and discuss YPs’ views of their future, and research objective three: interventions and services aimed at transition from care and YPs’ evaluation of them. These broad topics were explored during the course of the group discussion by employing open-ended and probing questions. Follow up questions were used when necessary (Llamputtong, 2011). The full question guide can be found in Annexure 16.

3.6.4. Focus group and interviews with SWs and CYCWs

The mini-focus groups with SWs and focus group with CYCWs were held at a venue at one of the CYCCs. The CYCC that provided the venue has a skills centre that offers a hospitality training course. As part of this course the trainees, some of whom are CLs, make up snack platters to order. I had planned to provide refreshments for the various groups, and was happy to be able to support this CYCC initiative by purchasing platters for the mini-focus and focus group from the skill centre. The venue was not ideal, in that it was a large room, with a high ceiling situated close to a busy road and the access road to the CYCC. However, the CYCC had generously offered the venue at no charge, and the focus groups were held mid-morning, when the traffic was not too busy. I used two recording devices in case background noise was a problem.
The mini-focus group session conducted with the SWs comprised three individuals. I provided refreshments for the SWs, but did not include an ice-breaker activity as they were a small group of colleagues who knew one another quite well, although a short time for general conversation and settling in was allowed (Hennink, 2007). I outlined the nature and purpose of the research as well as confirming that the extent of the SWs’ participation was confined to one mini-focus group session of a maximum of 90 minutes. The SWs were provided with informed consent forms (Annexure 17), and a permission to record the interview form (Annexure 8), and given some time to read them before I reviewed the forms with the SWs, going through them clause by clause and asking if the SWs had any questions. Following this process the consent forms were signed and returned to me (Hennink, 2007).

The mini-focus group discussion was informed by the following objectives; objective two, establish how SWs see the futures of YPIC, and what resilience factors can they identify; objective three, what interventions or services aimed at facilitating transition out of care are offered and the SWs’ evaluation of these; and objective four, what challenges and successes SWs have experienced in facilitating YPs’ transition from care. A question guide was used with this mini-focus group, following the same broad structure of questions described in section 3.6.3. The introductory question for the SWs was, “I am wondering what kind of future you see ahead of the young people shortly to leave the care system?” An example of a transition question is, “What has your experience been of care leavers and their futures?” The full question guide can be found in Annexure 18.

The SW (Lee) recruited from the fourth CYCC was interviewed individually on my return visit to Port Elizabeth. The interview took place at the CYCC where the SW was employed. The SW was offered refreshments and there was a warm up period while we had coffee together. I then went through the informed consent form with the SW, reading each clause individually and ensuring that he understood and agreed. After he had signed the consent form the interview commenced using the same question guide that informed the mini-focus group discussion with the SWs.

The CYCW focus group was held at the same venue as the SWs’ mini-focus group. I provided refreshments for the participants and allowed some time for settling in. As this was a larger group comprising of individuals from different CYCCs I included an ice-breaker activity (Hennink, 2007). I asked the participants to talk to the person next to them for two minutes, then introduce their partner by telling the group their name and two things about them. I was careful to stress the norm of confidentiality, and remind the participants to share only such information as they felt safe to disclose. As part of the informed consent process I outlined the nature and purpose of the research and the extent of the CYCWs participation. The participants were provided with the informed consent form
(Annexure 19), and consent to record the interview form (Annexure 8). I read out the information on the forms, and allowed some time for the participants to read the forms through. I asked if anyone had any questions before they signed the forms (Hennink et al., 2011). When the forms had been signed and returned to me the focus group discussion commenced.

I opened the discussion with a round robin, asking each CYCW in turn to state her name and how long she had been a CYCW, before moving onto the content of the focus group guide. The discussion for this focus group was also informed by objectives two, three and four, but the questions were phrased differently to reflect the different roles the CYCWs play in the lives of YPIC. For example, where the SWs were asked about managerial aspects of care-leaving, such as “When does preparation for leaving care begin at your organization?” the CYCCs were asked “How do you see your role in preparing YP to leave the CYCC?” and “What do you think YP need as they leave the CYCC?” The full question guide can be found in (Annexure 20).

The CYCW (Agnes) recruited from the fourth CYCC was interviewed individually when I returned to Port Elizabeth for the second round of data collection. She was interviewed at the CYCC where she was employed. As part of the warm up period I offered her refreshments, and we had coffee together before commencing the interview. I went through the informed consent form clause by clause, allowing time for the CYCC to ask questions. After she had signed the consent form, the interview proceeded using the same question guide that informed the CYCW focus group.

3.7. Data analysis

In his discussion of data analysis in phenomenological research, Creswell (2007) describes the process of thematic analysis as the method most suited to this design. Therefore, thematic analysis was the method of data analysis used in this study. Thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative research and is regarded as a core skill for qualitative researchers to master, as it is useful as a foundation for other types of qualitative analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2006) maintain that the chief benefit of thematic analysis is its theoretical flexibility, as it is independent of theory and can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches.

Thematic analysis is a flexible and useful research tool that has the potential to yield a rich, detailed and complex account of the data which is in keeping with phenomenological design (Creswell, 2007; Fouché, 2005; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data, the purpose of which is to analytically examine narratives of life stories by breaking the text down into relatively small units or themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi
et al., 2013). The process of thematic analysis concentrates on developing categories, established inductively from the data, which enables a systematic description to emerge (Ezzy, 2002; Fossey et al., 2002; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). This is an ongoing comparative method that involves an emerging process of classifying, comparing and categorizing segments of text (Fossey et al., 2002; Guest et al., 2012).

Although thematic analysis is widely used, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that a downfall of the approach is that it is poorly defined, and the methods employed are often described in broad and general terms. Fossey et al. (2002) maintain that in order for qualitative studies to be credible they must include a detailed description of all methods used, a position that is extensively supported in the literature (Kline, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nicholls, 2009). In order to address these concerns, I used the open coding system described by Ezzy (2002), the detailed process of which was founded on Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phase method and is detailed below.

The first phase identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) is familiarizing oneself with the data. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcription is regarded as part of the immersion process, and as an excellent means to become familiar with the material (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nicholls, 2009). Immersion requires that one is familiar with all aspects of the data, and necessitates that the material is read through at least once, after transcription, prior to beginning coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis aims to identify repeated patterns of meaning across an entire data set, thus the researcher must be familiar with all data from all of the interviews. The transcription of the interviews was outsourced, but I verified the accuracy of each transcription by listening to the recording while reading the transcription prior to coding. The transcriptions were set out in a four column table format, the first column being for the line number, second for identification of the speaker, the third for the content and the fourth for the researcher’s code. Once I had verified the accuracy of the transcriptions, the data was ‘cleaned’ by removing all identifying information. Following this, the participants were assigned a pseudonym. The transcriptions were then entered into an Access database. Each interview and participant were numbered, and the interviews were identified by type, for example, life-map, possible selves, focus group or interview. See Annexures 22 and 22 for extracts of a transcribed life-map and possible-me tree interview, and Annexures 23, 24 and 25 for extracts of a transcribed focus group with the YP, SWs and CYCWs.

Ezzy (2002) suggests that the process of generating initial codes is possible only through a close examination of data. The second phase of thematic analysis begins when the researcher has read and familiarized herself with the data, and has created an initial list of ideas about the content of the data and what is of interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process of “open coding” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 88)
involves considerable experimentation, and is part of the analysis, as this is the beginning of organizing the data into meaningful groups (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this phase of the data analysis, the text was examined line by line, and the initial codes were entered into the fourth column of the transcription table. As I read through the transcripts and entered the codes, I made a list of ideas about the content of the data, and what was interesting, which was the beginning of the identification of themes. At this point in the process, there were many codes and patterns identified. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), where time permits, it is helpful to code for as many potential themes as possible, as themes might be interesting at a later stage. Although it was time consuming, I allocated as many codes as possible, resulting in an initial list of 69 codes.

During this stage, I worked in a colour coded notebook; each of the groups of interviews, life-maps, possible-me trees, mini-focus groups with the YP and SWs and the focus group with the CYCCs had their own section in the book. The structure of the life-map and possible-me tree drawings were instrumental in identifying patterns in the data. For example, YP were asked to describe their life at three different points, ages 18, 21 and 25. Patterns of response emerged from each of these points; for example, studying further was a common response at age 18, while married with family was mentioned at age 25.

The next phase, phase three of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) process, involves **sorting the different codes into possible themes**, and **arranging the appropriate coded extracts from the data within the themes**. To assist the process of organizing my ideas, I used the memo writing techniques clustering and mind maps. Memo writing is considered to be an integral part of data analysis in qualitative research (Sbaraini et al., 2011). Charmaz (2006) states that memo writing is the critical intermediate step between data collection and beginning the write up of the paper. Memo writing motivates the researcher to begin analysing data and codes early in the research process, and sustained engagement in the analysis is promoted by successive memo writing (Charmaz, 2006). Further, memos provide an opportunity for comparisons across the data set, within codes and categories (Sbaraini et al., 2011). The use of memos helps the researcher to think about the data and discover her ideas about them.

Charmaz (2006) provides several examples of memo writing techniques, and comprehensive discussion about the merits of each technique. I used “clustering” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 86), which is a form of mind-mapping and a strategy I use frequently when preparing papers or presentations. Clustering is a useful technique for beginning the process of identifying key points and generating ideas, and offers a flexible diagram of relationships (Charmaz, 2006). Clustering provides a quick and changeable visual representation of how information fits together and relates to other ideas.
When creating the clusters, or mind maps, I would start with a tentative theme that I had identified from the data and write this in the centre of an A4 page. I would then map ideas, from the data, about sub-themes that spoke to the theme. When I had done these for the emergent themes, I would then start a new set of mind maps placing the research objective in the centre of an A4 page. I would then map the themes that fitted the objective around the central objective. An example of one of my mind maps is found in (Annexure 26). These broad mind maps were refined into mind maps that addressed each sub-theme and included ideas from the interviews that supported the sub-theme.

The potential themes were then refined and formalised into themes, which is phase four of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) process. The themes were then subjected to a review by myself and my supervisor to establish if there was enough data to support them, whether some needed to be collapsed into each other, or if themes needed to be broken down into further sub-themes. This process was then repeated across the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I also used mind mapping in this aspect of the data analysis. The diagramming helped me to crystalize my thoughts about the data, provided structure and enabled me to see areas where data from different interviews connected. Seeing these connections was helpful as it identified aspects of the interviews that would be assigned more than one code. The codes were entered into the interview transcripts on an Access database, on a line by line basis, and a code list was also created in Access (Annexure 27).

Phase five involved defining and naming themes, and extracting segments from the data that supported them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The Access database enabled me to extract the texts per code. These were then scrutinized to establish the story that they told, and how this story fit with the broader account that I was telling about the data in relation to the research question. Each theme was considered in isolation, and in relation to the other themes, to build a holistic picture of the data, which was used to complete the sixth and final phase of the process of analysis: writing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### 3.8. Ensuring trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the measures of quality applied during the research and after completion of the study, which ensure the legitimacy of the research process and convince the reader that he or she can trust the researcher’s assertions and conclusions (Golafshani, 2003; McBrien, 2008; Nicholls, 2009). The measures of trustworthiness employed in qualitative research are credibility,
transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness refers to the ability of the research to produce results that are credible and dependable. Credibility refers to the extent to which the research conclusions can be relied upon, and credible research produces findings that are convincing and believable (van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). Transferability denotes the degree to which the findings may be applied to other settings or with other participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Dependability refers to the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did occur as the researcher states they did, and confirmability refers to the extent to which the research can be regarded as an accurate expression of the participants’ voices as opposed to the views and biases of the researcher (van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe numerous strategies for ensuring trustworthiness. The strategies identified as most relevant and implemented in this study to ensure its trustworthiness are: prolonged engagement, triangulation, different methods of data collection and multiple sites, frequent debriefing, an audit trail, using appropriate and recognized research methods, providing a comprehensive discussion of the methodology and limitations of the study, and promoting participant honesty and reflexivity. A summary of the strategies employed to ensure trustworthiness is found in Table 3.4.

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<tr>
<th>Quality criterion</th>
<th>Strategies employed</th>
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<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>• Appropriate, recognised research methods employed&lt;br&gt;• Detailed description of methodology and limitations&lt;br&gt;• Strategies to ensure honesty in participants&lt;br&gt;• Frequent debriefing&lt;br&gt;• Use of reflexivity&lt;br&gt;• Triangulation of sites, sources and methods&lt;br&gt;• Prolonged engagement&lt;br&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>• Provision of background information to establish the context of the study (see chapter 1)&lt;br&gt;• Detailed description of methods used&lt;br&gt;• Thick description (quotes from interviews and field notes)&lt;br&gt;• Purposive sampling&lt;br&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>• Triangulation of sites, sources and methods&lt;br&gt;• Use of appropriate research methods&lt;br&gt;• Detailed description of methodology, allowing research to be repeated&lt;br&gt;• Audit trail&lt;br&gt;• Description of limitations&lt;br&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmability</td>
<td>• Triangulation of sites, sources and methods&lt;br&gt;• Prolonged engagement&lt;br&gt;• Audit trail&lt;br&gt;• Use of appropriate research methods&lt;br&gt;• Detailed description of methodology and limitations&lt;br&gt;</td>
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Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain that prolonged engagement contributes to the credibility and confirmability of a study. Prolonged engagement requires that the researcher spends sufficient time at a research site to become immersed in its culture and context, and aware of the nuances and
distortions that might find their way into the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Prolonged engagement is also pivotal in building trust with participants. Trust, as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), is a developmental process. As participants observe and engage with the researcher over time, they evaluate whether the researcher is a person of integrity, whom they can trust to use the information they provide honourably (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). So, as much as the researcher observes during the period of prolonged engagement, they are also being observed, and the consequent evaluations impact on the data collected.

Although I did not engage in this process entirely as envisaged by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as the study was undertaken in balance with work and financial commitments and constraints, I was nonetheless able to spend a considerable amount of time at the research sites. I relocated to Port Elizabeth for the duration of the data collection, and worked at each site on a weekly rotational basis. Thus I was able engage with different people at different times (CYCWs, for example, work weekly rotational shifts) and to see the YP at different points during their weeks. As far as possible, I worked in blocks of time: for example, three afternoons at one CYCC to begin and conclude each round of interviews with the YP from that facility.

In total, I saw each YP five times: an initial introductory meeting was held to introduce myself and the research, and a follow up meeting to meet with the YP who were willing to participate in the study and recap the nature and extent of their involvement and ethical issues. Two individual interviews were held with YP who agreed to take part in the study, and finally mini-focus groups were held at each CYCC with the YP who participated in the individual interviews. A total of three meetings were held with each social worker and CYCW: a preliminary meeting and follow up meeting as above, and then the focus group session. In this way I had a form of prolonged engagement with the participants, as I spent considerable time at the various CYCCs while recruiting participants, setting up the appointments and conducting the interviews, as well as between appointment times when I would be on site confirming interview venues.

Triangulation contributes to the veracity of a study across several domains of trustworthiness, specifically credibility, dependability and confirmability (Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Triangulation strengthens a study by combining two or more methods, sources, sites, investigators or theories (Golafshani, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McBrien, 2008). This study used triangulation of methods, sources and sites.

Shenton (2004) suggests that the use of different methods of data collection in one study offsets their individual shortcomings and maximizes their respective advantages. Different methodologies were used in this study to collect data, including visual mapping techniques, semi-structured interviews
and focus groups. Triangulation of sources was also employed as different groups of participants (YPIC, SWs and CYCWs) who might have relevant insight and input into the research question were identified and interviewed. Also multiple sites (three of them) were selected for the study. Shenton (2004) suggests that using multiple sites reduces the effect of particular factors specific to one institution, and that credibility is increased when similar results emerge over different sites. Making use of multiple sources and sites is advantageous, as individual viewpoints can be verified against others and a rich picture emerges that is based on the contributions of a range of individuals from a variety of contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Combining methods, participants and research sites contributes to a fuller and more holistic and accurate picture of the population being studied, thus contributing to the credibility, dependability and confirmability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McBrien, 2008).

Frequent debriefing was also used to contribute to the credibility of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe peer debriefing as an analytic discussion with the purpose of keeping the researcher aware of her own position and the research process, as a process of checking working hypotheses, and as an opportunity for the researcher to voice emotions and feelings that may emerge from carrying out the research. Shenton (2004) suggests that debriefing can serve to broaden the researcher’s vision and test ideas, and allows the supervisor to point out flaws in the proposed course of action. Debriefing was provided by ongoing engagement with my academic supervisor and an outside colleague. My academic supervisor and colleague are experienced researchers. I had fortnightly meetings with my colleague for the purpose of debriefing and support for the duration of the data collection and analysis, and was in regular contact via email, telephone or face-to-face contact with my academic supervisor.

An audit trail was used to contribute to the dependability and confirmability of the study. An audit trail requires that the researcher keeps all records of all transactions from the onset of the research process to the conclusion of the eventual write up (Kelly, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). These records are subjected to checks by the research supervisor to verify their accuracy, to ensure that the research is being carried out honestly and that the findings are true to the participants’ input. The audit trail allows any interested party to trace the progression of the research stage by stage from the decisions made and description of the procedures followed (Shenton, 2004). The audit trail includes appendixes of the interview schedules, discussion guides, rubrics and instructions for the visual activities, as well as the letters requesting entry to the research sites, letters to the various populations and consent forms. Finally, the audit trail included examples of transcripts providing cross references to direct quotes.
Using appropriate, recognized research methods, providing a comprehensive and detailed description of the methodology, and a discussion of the limitations contribute significantly to the credibility, dependability and confirmability of a study (Shenton, 2004). The research design and methods used have been described in detail in this chapter, and the theoretical rationales for each decision have been included.

Promoting participant honesty also contributes to the trustworthiness of a study. Building trust with participants and addressing power differentials are strategies that contribute towards honesty. Prolonged engagement contributes towards the development of trust, and the process of informed consent also allows participants to engage or withdraw from the research process (Shenton, 2004). The power dynamics with YP and CYCWs, and the strategies used to address them are discussed in the ethics section of this chapter.

Journaling provides scope for reflection, which is “crucial to becoming a better researcher” (Watt, 2007, p. 84), and was employed in this study as a method of reflexivity. I kept a personal journal from the outset of the research process, in which I documented my thoughts and evaluations as the research progressed (Appendix 10). My reflections included considering the inevitability of power differentials and the assumptions, based on my experience in practice, that I brought to the study (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Shenton (2004) refers to this as a “reflective commentary” (Shenton, 2004, p. 68), and argues that journaling plays a key role in monitoring the researcher’s developing constructions, which is critical to establishing credibility.

Reflexivity is widely noted in the literature as contributing to all aspects of trustworthiness (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McBrien, 2008; Shenton, 2004; Watt, 2007). Reflexivity is a process of critical reflection that requires the researcher to ask of themselves, ‘What do I know and how do I know it?’ (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Watt, 2007). This self-aware meta-analysis occurs at all stages of the research process, from understanding personal reasons for choosing the topic of study, to a critical examination of the data collection and analysis techniques (Finlay, 2002; Watt, 2007). Watt (2007) states that the researcher should be aware of her biases, feelings and thoughts, and how these may be influencing the research, while Mauthner and Doucet (2003) argue that the researcher cannot be separate from the study, and emphasise the interconnectedness of the researcher, methodology, participants and context. Further, Creswell (2007) and Shenton (2004) suggest that a reflexivity statement by the researcher contributes to the overall trustworthiness of a study. A reflexivity statement makes the researcher’s background and experiences evident to the reader, and discusses how these might influence the direction of a study (Creswell, 2009). My reflexivity statement follows in the next paragraphs.
I am a white female, of British nationality, although I have lived in South Africa for 33 years, essentially for all of my adult life. I entered University in 2004 to study my undergraduate degrees when I was in my early 40’s. I am a registered social worker and have worked in diverse fields of social work. My early experience as a social worker was in the field of statutory work, particularly child protection. My interest in the field of CYCCs and care-leaving was prompted by a placement of a particular child in a CYCC. During the course of the interviews with the family, it transpired that this was the fourth generation of this family to be placed in a CYCC. As a result of this information, I went back to my case-load of children placed in CYCCs and discovered that this was not unusual. Further to this, there were a few children on my case-load who were about to age out of the care system. I found myself arguing for transition services, such as links to educational bursaries, assistance with driver’s licences and links to health care facilities and accommodation that could not be provided.

I left the field of child protection after three years, and opened my own practice. At this time my daughter, who is also a social worker, was the manager of a small CYCC in the town where we live, and she experienced the same struggles and frustrations I had when trying to provide services for YP who were soon to leave the CYCC. Thus my interest in the field of care leaving is prompted by my experience in the field of the generational nature of CYCC placements, and the frustration I experienced and observed when trying to provide services that might potentially improve the outcomes for CL’s and break the cycle of family placements.

I question the validity of removing children and YP from their families if the removal is not to improve their life chances, not only in the short term, but over their life span. However, I realize that placements in CYCCs are a reality and necessity for some children. My position in this regard is that, even in the context of limited funds, opportunities, legislation and support services, we should be providing the best possible services to YPIC that we can, aimed at improving their life chances over their life span. Having worked in the ‘welfare’ context, I have experienced the challenges of service provision with limited resources. However, I believe that services can be provided to YPIC that can contribute to their life-span well-being and functioning, which do not necessarily involve a great deal of financial cost. This position, when added to my experience and observation of the lack of emphasis given to care leaving and care leavers, means that as a researcher, I have to guard against allowing these to influence how I read, analyse and present the data.
Finally, transferability is the qualitative response to the quantitative concept of external validity or generalizability (Shenton, 2004). Creswell (2009) argues that the concept has limited value in qualitative research, as the intent of qualitative study is to investigate particular contexts and specific sites, not to generalize findings (Creswell, 2009). In qualitative research the concept of transferability refers to the extent to which the findings from one study can be applied to other situations (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Merriam, 2009). Strategies to ensure transferability include employing purposive sampling, providing good documentation of the qualitative processes followed throughout the study, affording background information to establish the context of the problem and study and including a thick description in the form of quotes from participant interviews and the researchers field notes (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) suggests that the inclusion of these strategies allows future researchers to decide whether the study ‘fits’ with their situation, and thus constitutes transferability.

3.9. Ethical considerations

Social science research involves working with people, and qualitative research, in particular, carries potential to cause distress to its participants. The researcher must be concerned with the welfare of her participants and take steps to ensure their well-being. The research proposal for this study was reviewed and approved by the University of Johannesburg’s Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee on 11 March 2014 (Annexure 28). The following section discusses the ethical considerations specific to conducting research with children and young people, and the measures taken to ensure that this study was carried out in an ethical manner. The actions taken to ensure that ethical standards were observed with the adult populations of this study are also discussed.

3.9.1. Ethical considerations in research with YP

The field of youth and youth related issues is an expanding area for social science research, and presents its own set of challenges and ethical questions (France, 2004; Fraser & Robinson, 2004). Historically, the context of studies involving YP was based on a deficit model (France, 2004; Kendrick et al., 2008). Research was “focused on rather than with young people” (France, 2004, p. 177), and YP were regarded as “object” and “subject” in the research process (Robinson & Kellet, 2004, p. 85). Recently, youth research has recognised that YP are competent social actors, expert in their own lives and that they have a valuable contribution to make in matters and services pertaining to them (France, 2004; Schenk & Williamson, 2005; Shaw et al., 2011). However, this shift in perspective highlights contradictions between the view of YP held by social science research, and the legal and social frameworks within which such research is carried out. It points to ethical tensions
that must be resolved if research is to be undertaken that makes a positive contribution to the body of knowledge concerning what it means to be young (France, 2004).

A significant omission from the statutes relevant to YP is a definition of the term ‘youth’ or ‘adolescent’ (France, 2004). In South Africa a child is defined as “a person under the age of 18 years” (RSA, 2005, section 1, g), a definition that is also found in the Children Act (UK, 1989). This suggests that the transition from childhood to adulthood is a single event and omits the developmental stage of adolescence. However, other legislation clearly recognises various stages of development, and regards YP as competent to make decisions concerning their lives independently of adult control. For example, the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (RSA, 1996a) states that a minor child must be advised to consult her parents but may not be denied a termination of pregnancy if she declines to do so. The Children’s Act (RSA, 2005) allows that children over the age of 12 may consent to medical procedures and treatment, and obtain contraceptives without parental consent.

However, despite the recognition of the competency of YP to make decisions in significant areas of their lives, there is no clear consensus or ruling concerning when YP can consent to participate in research independently of the consent of their parents or those having parental responsibilities (Alderson, 2004, 2014). Thus, Alderson (2014) recommends requesting parental consent when planning to carry out research with YP under the age of 18. Parental consent may serve a protective function, but paradoxically may serve to silence the voice of YP (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). Moses (2008) comments on the disparity in power and status between children and adults. The role of gatekeepers in blocking access to YPs’ participation in research is noted as the most significant challenge to undertaking research with this population (Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Kendrick et al., 2008). Unfortunately, this power dynamic limits the capacity of YP to give or withhold their consent to participate, and creates tension around the ethical issue of autonomy (Moses, 2008; Robinson & Kellet, 2004).

Alderson and Morrow (2011) state that the communication of clear and good information alongside the values of respect and trust is foundational to consent. They further assert that when YP are adequately informed and understand the purpose of the consent process and the research exercise, they are in a position of autonomy to consent or refuse if they so wish (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). The use of information leaflets is widely discussed in the literature (Alderson, 2004; Alderson & Morrow, 2011; France, 2004; McCarry, 2012) and were employed in this study as a method of addressing the issues of consent and autonomy.

The leaflets (Annexure 4) were set out in an accessible and readable format, and included detailed information about the aims of the research, the reason for carrying out the research, the data collection
techniques, number of interviews and their estimated duration (Alderson & Morrow, 2011; France, 2004). The rights of YP were included (the right not to consent, the right to withdraw at any time without fear of repercussions and the right to have access to their transcripts), as was the meaning of confidentiality and the measures in place to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants (Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Flewitt, 2014).

Information was also provided about measures to protect YPs’ privacy and confidentiality, as well as the storage and disposal of transcripts (Schenk & Williamson, 2005). The leaflets included contact details for the researcher and supervisor, and who YP could contact if they wished to comment or complain (France, 2004). Alderson and Morrow (2011) also state that one should include details of how the information will be used, but McCurry (2012) cautions that the researcher should be realistic and not create false hope that the YP’s input will bring about immediate and significant change. Alderson (2004) includes a comprehensive layout of an information leaflet, which was used as the basis for the leaflet used in this research.

A further aspect of consent that relates to autonomy is the procurement of ongoing consent. Alderson (2004), France (2004) and Shaw et al. (2011) argue for obtaining ongoing consent as a means of ensuring that YP have the opportunity to withdraw at each stage of the research process. Therefore, at the beginning of each interview the researcher reviewed the information in the leaflets provided and asked if the YP wished to continue as a participant in the research. Mason (2004) points out that the researcher must be sensitive to pressures that may have been brought to bear on the YP, and to be aware of the nature of power in the adult/YP relationships when deciding whether or not consent has been given freely. Reviewing consent on an ongoing basis allowed opportunities for the development of trust between YP and researcher, which may have allowed YP to decline to continue in the research if that was their true desire (Flewitt, 2014).

The matter of parental consent was addressed by providing a duplicate leaflet containing the same information to the parents of the YP (Alderson, 2014). Alderson and Morrow (2011) maintain that although adults are the major obstacle to participation of YP, this may be because parents are often “bypassed instead of informed” (Alderson & Morrow, 2011, p. 107). France (2004) argues that when the intended research is not of a sensitive nature, “passive consent” (France, 2004, p. 183) will be sufficient. Passive consent takes the form of a letter that requires a response if the parents object. If the letter is not returned, it is assumed that the parental consent has been granted for the YP to take part in the research (France, 2004). To this end, a letter was attached to the leaflet to be signed and returned if the parents did not consent to the YP taking part in the research (Annexure 5). The initial approach to parents was made by the social worker at the CYCC, who explained the nature of the
research, and the letter and leaflet were posted thereafter. If the parents had any queries, they were referred directly to the researcher or her supervisor, whose contact details were on the letter.

Autonomy was also addressed in the methods of data collection that were used in this study. The use of creative data collection techniques that allow YP to control the pace and content of an interview can facilitate an intense level of participation and reinforce respect for YPs’ competence (Alderson, 2014; Alderson & Morrow, 2011). However, the use of creative activities raises concerns about the privacy and confidentiality of YP. It was the intent of the researcher that these data collection techniques would have benefit to the participants, as they had the potential to generate awareness and insight into their possible self, and to facilitate awareness of their life journey, their strengths as they go forward, potential challenges and resources.

I was, however, aware that the artefacts themselves may have contained images or information that could identify the YP concerned. Children and YP are entitled to the same degree of confidentiality as adult participants in research (Shaw et al., 2011), and to prevent unintentional disclosure, photographs or copies of artefacts were edited to eliminate any identifying details. Permission to use copies of each of the artefacts was secured from YP at the close of each interview. Participants’ identities were protected by using a pseudonym of their choice in the write up of the findings (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). Similarly, names of relatives and locations were deleted from the transcripts and substitutions were made in the eventual write up. All hardcopies of transcripts and consent forms were stored in a locked filing cabinet, and all data stored on computer was password protected.

The above measures were intended to afford YP the same degree of protection as adult participants. However, when working with YP the safety of the participant overrides the researcher’s responsibility to guarantee confidentiality (Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Shaw et al., 2011), and The Children’s Amendment Act (41 of 2007, section 110 1 & 2) is clear in its instruction that allegations of abuse must be reported. The limits of confidentiality were acknowledged in the information leaflets and as part of the ongoing consent process (Kendrick et al., 2008; Shaw et al., 2011). However, Mason (2004) and France (2004) caution that reporting a YP’s disclosure could be perceived as a betrayal. To circumvent this, Alderson and Morrow (2011) suggest that the researcher should discuss the disclosure, and the researcher’s responsibility to report it, with the YP and identify an adult to whom the YP could disclose the matter. This was the strategy that was adopted in this study, although in the event, there were no reports of abuse to manage.

When undertaking any research, but particularly research involving children and YP, the researcher has an ethical responsibility to balance the risks and benefits to the participant of taking part in the
The identifiable potential risks of taking part in this study were emotional distress and disappointed expectations.

Although the data collection techniques were intended to be positive in their application there was a risk that they might bring to the fore anxieties or unresolved emotional issues. However, the activities were strengths based, and sought to recognize how YP had already overcome challenges and identify sources of support and resources available to them. Thus the data collection methods might have served to address anxieties. As part of the ongoing consent process, all YP taking part in the study were provided with the details of on-site and community counselling and support services (France, 2004).

Alderson and Morrow (2011) argue that the friendly relationship between researcher and participant can pose a risk to YP, and France (2004) counsels against blurring of roles and boundaries when carrying out research with children and YP to reduce the risk of harm to the participants. The presence of a willing listener is cited as a benefit to YP, but Alderson and Morrow (2011) suggest that the brief friendly relationship between participant and researcher, particularly when researching vulnerable or disadvantaged populations of children and YP, may exacerbate feelings of rejection and betrayal. To minimize this risk the number of interviews was explicitly mentioned in the information leaflet, and the number of interviews remaining made clear at the beginning of each interview.

A further risk to YP may be found in the expectations YP might have about the impact their participation might have. Despite emerging acknowledgement that children and YP have a valuable contribution to make in matters pertaining them, the reality is that the input of children and YP is rarely considered, and their voices are often ignored (Kendrick et al., 2008; Moses, 2008). The resulting disappointment and disillusionment presents a risk to YP (Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Hill, 2006). YP taking part in this study would not benefit directly from any changes that may be implemented as a result of this research, as they would have exited the statutory system before the research was completed. The duration of the study and the estimated time frame for completion was be made clear to YP as part of the ongoing process of consent. It was also explained, as suggested by Alderson and Morrow (2011), that the implementation of any suggestions YP might make concerning change could not be promised.

### 3.9.2. Ethical considerations with adult participants

The focus groups with SWs and CYCWs were conducted after the focus group interviews with YP. This was in order that SWs and CYCWs could become familiar with the researcher over time to develop a level of trust before the commencement of the interviews. They were given an information
letter and a consent form to take away and consider. Follow up information sessions with the adult participants were held when at the sites to interview YP.

The development of trust in the researcher is ethically important, as staff members, particularly CYCWs, may have felt obliged to take part in the research as power differentials may exist and must be recognised (Coughlan & Collins, 2001). Coughlan and Collins (2001) comment on the disparity in level of education and challenges relating to perceived power and powerlessness when recruiting CYCWs. Thus building a relationship of trust may have allowed CYCWs, or SWs, opportunity to decline to participate in the study if they so wished and may have encouraged more open and honest participation.

The study was explained to the SWs and CYCWs at an initial meeting to recruit possible participants. This was repeated at the commencement of the focus groups and participants were informed of their rights not to take part, not to answer questions they found distressing, and the contact details of counselling services should they require further debriefing after the focus group session. Participants were also informed of the measures in place to ensure their right to confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by using a pseudonym or code to refer to participants in the write up, and removing all identifying information from transcripts and write up documents. All data stored on my computer was password protected, and hard copies of the transcriptions were stored in a locked filing cabinet. Participants were informed of their right to see the transcripts and a report of the eventual findings. I suggested that I would return and present a summary of the findings of the study to any interested parties. Informed consent and permission to record the interviews were secured, in writing, from all participants (Annexures 7, 8, 16 & 18).

Participants may have benefitted from contributing to this study, as voicing their views and concerns to an outside party may have helped them to feel they were making a contribution to the wellbeing of the YP currently in their care, and those still to come. However, this also presented a risk, in that lack of concrete follow up action on the part of policy makers, or CYCC managers could lead to a feeling of despondency or having been exploited. To balance these risks and benefits, it was made clear to the participants that while their input was valuable and valued, implementation of any suggestions could not be promised.

3.10. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research approach and design and has provided a detailed description of the methodology used in this study, supported by relevant theory. Trustworthiness has been discussed and the strategies implemented to ensure the robustness of this research have been
described in detail. The ethical considerations of carrying out research with vulnerable populations have been comprehensively discussed, linked with relevant literature, and the measures taken to ensure that ethical standards were upheld with all participants have been described. The next chapter presents the findings that emerged from the data, linked to relevant literature, and discussed within the theoretical frameworks of resilience and possible selves.
Chapter 4. Findings

4.1. Introduction

The findings chapter is at the heart of any treatise or thesis document, as it is in this chapter that the contributions and work of the participants and researcher combine to address the aim and objectives of the study. Chapter four discusses the findings of the study and opens with a brief description of the YP who took part in this research. I will then move on to discuss the findings from the research under headings informed by the themes that emerged from the data. Thus, the views of the YP with regard to their futures will be presented, and resilience factors will be identified and discussed. The discussion of the first theme concludes with a section that discusses the SWs and CYCWs understand the concept of resilience. The second theme concerned how the SWs and child and CYCWs saw the futures of the CLs. The third theme, establishing what interventions and services are offered to CLs, as well as the CLs’ evaluation of these services will be discussed, and the chapter concludes by presenting the theme of challenges and successes experienced by SWs and CYCWs as they facilitate CLs’ transition from care. All of these findings will be linked to relevant literature and discussed within the framework of the reciprocal relationship between possible selves and resilience theories.

4.2. The CLs who participated in this study

Table 4.1 presents the demographic profile of the participants who took part in the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>CYCC</th>
<th>Years in CYCC</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nosipho</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>CYCC1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauline</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>CYCC1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10 V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>CYCC1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10 V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>CYCC2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10 V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewel</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>CYCC2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10 V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>CYCC2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10 V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgina</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>CYCC2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>CYCC2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10 V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean-Paul</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>CYCC3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>CYCC3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thandi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>CYCC4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The CLs who took part in this study were between 17 and 18 years of age. All the participants would have had their 18th birthday during the course of 2015 (the year in which data collection took place) and were consequently aging out of the statutory system. The participants should all have completed
their education, either to grade 10 at a technical school (written as ‘10 V\(^1\) in Table 4.1), or grade 12 in a mainstream school by the end of 2015. The length of time they had been at a CYCC ranged between 4 and 18 years. Two participants had been moved within the statutory system to their current CYCC, but all of the CLs had been at their current placement for at least 2 years.

This chapter now moves into a discussion of the themes, sub-themes and categories that emerged from the data, linked to relevant literature. The section opens with Table 4.2 (on the following page), which presents the different themes, sub-themes and categories.

**4.3. Theme 1: CLs’ view of their futures**

The first theme to be discussed emerged from providing YP who were about to exit the care system with a platform to describe and discuss their views of their futures, in terms of their possible selves. The platforms for this discussion were the life-map and possible-me tree activities used as components of the data collection. This theme is discussed according to the three sub-themes that emerged from the data. The sub-themes of education and career goals and family relationships are presented. The section concludes with a discussion of an encouraging sub-theme of helping others, as the YP who took part in this study saw helping their families and communities as part of their futures.

Although the CLs who took part in this study expressed concern about the future, overall they were optimistic about their futures. One participant stated that she saw her future as “very bright, because I am already doing things that are going to make me better” (Nosipho, FGYP1#2\(^2\)). Another said “my future might be good, actually”... “I’ll be doing what I love and I’m looking forward to working every day” (Andrew, interview#2 & 16\(^3\)).

The general conversation of the participants reflected their developmental stage. They spoke of their excitement about leaving school, their peer group, boyfriends and girlfriends, and complained about their pocket money and their perceived lack of freedom. Several YP had dreams of being rich and famous; one as a dancer (Kerry, PS#64; possible-me tree drawing), one as a soccer player (Jean-Paul, A vocational school provides vocational based education for special needs learners with mild to moderate learning disabilities.

\(^1\) These quotes are referenced as follows: participant pseudonym, type of interview (Focus Group Young People) and focus group number (FGYP1) followed by the line (#) and number.

\(^2\) Andrew did not take part in a mini-focus group; he was interviewed individually using the same guide as for the mini-focus groups with the other YP. His quotes from this interview are referenced as pseudonym, interview line (#) and number.

\(^3\) These quotes are referenced as follows: participant pseudonym, Possible Selves interview (PS) line (#) and number.
Table 4.2  
Table of themes, sub-themes and categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme number</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CLs’ view of their futures</td>
<td>1.1 Education and career goals</td>
<td>4.1a CLs’ awareness and insight into their own behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 CLs’ knowledge of tertiary courses, requirements and application</td>
<td>4.1b CLs’ involvement in extramural activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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PS#154; possible-me tree drawing), and one as a hairdresser to music stars (Sandi, PS#22). Some saw travel in their futures (Nosipho, LM#4; Brian, PS#118, possible-me tree drawing; Andrew, PS#57 & 59). The participants’ life-maps and possible-me trees also reflected more sedate hopes. They spoke
of having a home and being able to provide for themselves (Sandi, LM#48; Denise, LM#24 & 30; Pauline, LM#4), and they spoke of employment (Brian, PS#2; Jade, life-map drawing; Pauline, LM#2; Sandi, LM#52). However, the primary focus of the interviews revolved around the subjects of education and career goals, and family. This is in keeping with literature that suggests that although adolescents express goals across a number of domains, their primary concerns are education and family (Massey, Gebhardt, & Garnefski, 2008). Sections 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 that follow discuss the findings of this study related to the sub-themes of education and career, and link these findings to the literature.

### 4.3.1. Sub-theme 1.1: Education and career goals

The sub-theme of education and career goals emerged strongly in the data; all twelve participants said that they planned to study further. One CL, who was attending a vocational school, hoped to continue her education to grade 12 (Jewel, LM#2), two of the young men (also in technical schools) were planning to go to trade school to obtain further qualifications after they left the CYCC (Jade, FGYP2#207; Jade, LM# 21 & 235). One participant planned to attend the skills centre attached to the CYCC to study fashion design (Kerry, LM#116), five participants had aspirations to attend university, and one had a non-specific idea to study further (Pauline, LM#6).

Several of the participants had ambitions to study further at university or college. Georgina (LM#4) said, “I’m going to study by [name of university], and Sandi (LM#48) said, “Here, when I’m eighteen, I want to study further. Thandi (LM#106) also said that “there is the [university], maybe I am going there, while Jade (LM#219) said that he wanted to “go to college and study further”.

The participants placed value on further study for different reasons. Some saw education as a key that would unlock future success. Thandi (LM#100) said that of all her goals “the most important thing here is that I must study. I cannot do anything without education”. Pauline (LM#2) saw further education as a means to a better life saying, “over here [in the life-map], this is also me, going to college, studying and getting a job and earning my own money. And this is where I achieve everything I want” (Pauline, LM#2). When asked what she meant by “everything I want”, Pauline (LM#4) replied, “getting a good job, a car and a big house”.

Georgina (LM#166) spoke of education as her way to “become someone in life”. She took pride in being the only one in her family to complete her education to grade 12, and saw further education as her means of avoiding becoming like her sisters. Georgina (LM#78) said that “out of all my mother’s

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5 These quotes are referenced as follows: participant pseudonym, Life-map interview (LM) line (#) and number.
children they did not finish school”. She went on to say, “I know I don’t have to be like my sisters. They don’t want to do anything, and I know what I can do” (Georgina, LM#168).

Most of the participants had definite career goals in mind, although they varied in terms of definition and development. Andrew (LM#9) was quite clear that his goal was to become an “air mechanic”. Jade (LM#235) spoke of becoming a welder, Brian (FGYP1#207) intended to study electrical engineering, and Georgina (LM#6 & 8) was planning to study nursing. Jean-Paul (PS#4) hoped to be a project manager in the field of construction. Denise (PS#38 & 52) had a primary goal and two back up ideas, in case her first choice of career was unattainable. Two of the participants stated that they wanted to become hairdressers, based on hairdressing being a subject at which they did well in school. When asked about her future career Jewel (LM#52) said, quite emphatically, “hairdresser, because I am good at that. When we take the doll and work, the teacher says I’m good at that and so I get good marks at that also. Likewise, Sandi (PS#122 & 124) said that she planned to continue with “hairdressing … ’cause I’m doing it at school”.

Initially, Nosipho (LM#14) had lots of different ideas, saying “there’s so many things I want in life”. Although she eventually settled on being a “designer” and “business woman” (Nosipho, LM#4 and 14), her ideas were global and lacked definition. However, by the time she participated in the focus group two weeks later, Nosipho’s (FGYP1#188) ideas had coalesced into the statement, “I want to register for business management”. Similarly, Pauline (LM#8) and Thandi (LM#42) had no particular career goals in mind, both saying “I don’t know” in the initial interview. One week later, during the possible selves interview Thandi (PS#6, 58 & 140) said that she thought she might be a good social worker, teacher or economist. It was evident that Pauline had not given much thought to her career plan, because her opening statement of “I want to be a doctor” (PS#4) was followed by “at the bank, the bank hospital in South Africa” (PS#6 & 8), a vague and confusing statement that could not be clarified. By the time Pauline participated in the focus group three weeks after the initial interview, this idea had been refined to “I thought I might consider edu-care” (Pauline, FGYP1#190).

The development of Nosipho, Pauline and Thandi’s career ideas over a period two to three weeks is interesting, as it suggests that given the opportunity, and sufficient time to process their thoughts, YP think about and develop ideas about their future occupations. This observation is well supported in the literature. Skorikov (2007) argues that preparing for a career is a progressive process, influenced by different developmental stages. Hartung, Porfeli, and Vondracek (2005) assert that career development begins in childhood, and Hirschi, Niles, and Akos (2011) maintain that children aged 10-12 actively engage in the process of framing occupational goals, using their interests, talents, values and beliefs to guide their learning choices. Thus it would seem that career development,
particularly for YPIC, should begin at least in grade seven to allow for these developmental processes to unfold. Career determination may be regarded as of particular concern to CLs, as career planning and the crystallization of career preferences during adolescence are significant indicators of coping behaviours and of managing the transition to early adulthood (Skorikov, 2007). Thus, career development and support should be a key programme in the CYCC context, to optimize CLs’ life chances when transitioning from care.

The focus on education of the YP who took part in this study as a route to a better future is reflected in the work of Theron (2015) and Theron and Theron (2014). Writing specifically about black South African youth, Theron and Theron (2014) argue that historically in South Africa, the education available to black South Africans equipped them for a lifetime of menial employment only. The Apartheid education system did not encourage or support aspirations of a university education for black youth. As a result, high school and tertiary education have become associated with upward mobility in terms of social and economic status. Young black South Africans are actively encouraged by their parents and community leaders to prioritise education as a way of breaking cycles of poverty, and “bringing honour to the collective of black South Africans” (Theron & Theron, 2014, p. 8). Theron (2015, p. 17) discusses the “valorization of education” among black South African youth, who anticipate that education will enable them to achieve status and make a difference in the lives of their families and communities. This “valorization” is also seen in the statements of the participants in this study (Georgina, LM#166; Thandi, LM#100) and may reflect a cultural emphasis on the role of education in promoting a better future.

Although most of the YP who took part in this study considered their future to be bright, and were focussed on further education as a means to access this bright future, their knowledge of available courses, entry requirements and bursary opportunities did not always reflect understanding, commitment and planning. Their responses indicated degrees of knowledge ranging from good and detailed, to nebulous. This finding is discussed in the following section.

4.3.2. Sub-theme 1.2: CLs’ knowledge of tertiary courses, requirements and application processes

The YPs’ knowledge of entry requirements and procedures, course duration and requirements, and bursary opportunities varied. Andrew (LM#36 & 37) and Denise (LM#38 & 52) had detailed knowledge about their course requirements. Denise (LM#38 & 52) was aware that she would spend “Three years are at university. I think in your third year you also do research and on the last year you go as a student teacher to a school. She knew that “even as a student teacher you have to give classes
to the kids while the original teacher is there. You have to get used to doing that” (Denise, PS#44). She also knew about the entry requirements:

- “You don’t need any particular subjects you just need your APS points has to be a certain amount and I have forgotten, but it must be around 30’s or 40’s. And then you study for four years if you want a degree in teaching” (Denise, PS#8).

Andrew (LM#35) listed his subjects at school as “geography, life sciences, business and Afrikaans, and English and life orientation”. When asked if these were suitable subjects for his career plan he replied, “Yes. My maths is not the one they want … in that math lit that I am doing I am meeting those standards then I might be accepted” (Andrew, LM#37). In South Africa maths is offered at two levels in grades 11 and 12: maths literacy and mathematics. Andrew was taking maths literacy, the ‘lower’ of the two options. He was aware that this was not the requirement of the course he wanted to take, but had made enquiries and established that if his grades were good enough they might be acceptable for entry to his chosen career.

Andrew and Denise also had contingency plans in case their first options did not work out. Andrew planned to apply with the Air Force if he did not get a bursary to study at University (Andrew, LM#29), Denise said “I was thinking that actually if I don’t get a bursary then I wanna try and go overseas and apply for an au pair there” (Denise, LM#33). Her thinking was that she could work overseas as an au pair in order to earn money to fund her tertiary education (Denise, possible-me tree drawing; FGYP2#161).

Denise and Andrew had clearly given a great deal of thought to their futures, and had been strategic in accessing the resources available to them that would help them go forward. Andrew, for example, had made good use of the CYCC computer and internet access to research his career. “I looked up on the internet for the, um, how do you say, for the entry requirements. There’s a computer room here, a lab” (Andrew, PS#67). The time spent in researching his chosen career had paid dividends for Andrew when his social worker introduced him to representatives of the corporate sponsors of the CYCC:

- “They were like ‘what do you want to study?’ … “and they said they want to see me next year, when I’m ready to study because they’re interested in sponsoring me. … They said that I have a clear view of what I want to do. And they said that they see like I’m determined to do something with my life, so they want to be part of it” (Andrew, PS#121 & 127).

Denise (PS#64) had made maximum use of career days held at her school to increase her knowledge of course curriculum and entry requirements, and the requirements of her contingency plan:
• “We had a career day with the lady that comes from America. Her whole business is in [town] somewhere and so then she came to us. And she told us about the whole course and she gave us pamphlets and flyers” (Denise, PS#54).

Denise had also been strategic, resourceful and determined in her use of other resources available to her, and in particular a private bursary programme offered to the CYCC by businessmen who were part of a local church. “At school I’m trying my best. I get help where ever I can and I attend all the classes. I have been to all the meetings [for the private bursary programme]” (Denise, PS#170). Denise had heard about the programme from previous CLs, and had put her name forward herself. She had also paid careful attention not only the requirements of the programme, such as attending the monthly life skills and personal development sessions, and task completion, but also to the broader purpose of these requirements (researcher’s field notes). She knew that funding was limited to one, or perhaps two, bursaries, and that participation, commitment and diligence would be part of the assessment criteria when the bursaries came to be allocated. She saw the personal value in the life skills sessions and tasks, but was also fully aware of the bigger picture of an opportunity to fulfil her academic and future goals, and was deliberately placing herself strategically to maximise her chances of being awarded a bursary (researcher’s field notes).

In addition, recognizing that her school marks needed improvement, Denise had showed considerable resourcefulness and resilience in accessing the support she felt she needed to address this:

• “I go to every extra class that I can go to. But now people want us to pay for the extra classes, so I decided I am just going to ask friends that have been there, so that they can explain the way that it was explained to them” (Denise, PS#174).

It is clear that Andrew and Denise were active in their career development, which according to career theorists is a crucial element in career success (Hirschi et al., 2011). However, these are also examples of resilience. Their ability to access and maximize the utility of available resources, and to think and act strategically, is what van Breda (2015, p. 330) refers to as “contextual responsiveness” and what Ungar (2012) regards as the processes of navigation and negotiation that demonstrate and contribute to resilience. Andrew and Denise demonstrated contextual responsiveness when they took advantage of the opportunities available to them, in the shape of a small computer lab at the CYCC, a careers day at school, extra lessons and an outside life skills and bursary scheme (navigation). They then exercised influence over these opportunities by using them to their advantage (negotiation). The CYCC had provided the computer facility and the school had organized the career day, pointing to the roles of Andrew and Denise’s social ecologies in making appropriate and relevant resources available to them (Ungar, 2012). Further, this demonstration of resilience in action was built on well-
developed possible selves that motivated and guided their choices, decisions and utilization of available resources.

While Andrew and Denise had clearly defined and well-thought-out career goals in mind, not all of the participants had such well-developed plans and knowledge. Georgina (LM#8 & 130), Kerry (LM#46) and Brian (FGYP1#207) had broad, rather unfocussed knowledge. Jade (possible-me tree drawing; PS#239 & 243) had a clear direction, stating that he was going to study welding at a local college. Welding was a subject that he enjoyed and was good at in school, and he said, “I am going to college to learn more about it” (Jade, PS#241). However, this seemed to be the extent of his commitment to the process, as he was relying on an aunt to drive the application process for him, saying “’cause my aunt, my aunt is gonna apply for me there” (Jade, LM#231). When asked what the application process involved Jade (LM#233) replied “I didn’t see”.

The opportunity for Brian (FGYP1#198) to decide on a career came from a visit from a local college to his school. “They [the college] came to our school one night asking if there are any children that have any idea what they want to do in future” (Brian, FGYP1#198). He went on to say that “[the college offers] Engineering, society, policy, education, entrepreneurship. There are lots of opportunities” (Brian, FGYP1# 202 & 203). I asked him what career he was interested in and he replied “tool making” (Brian, PS#6). However, when I invited him to tell me more about tool making, because I didn’t know anything about it, he said “I don’t know too, but that is what I want to learn” (Brian, PS#8). Brian went on to say that “they are waiting for my June results” (Brian, FGYP1#205) in order to make an application, and was confident that “the [CYCC] is gonna pay for my studies” (Brian, FGYP1#46). Although Brian (FGYP1#207) later said that he wanted to study electrical engineering, he offered no specific knowledge about what this might require in terms of school subjects, or what the course might entail.

Georgina (LM#6) stated with certainty that she was going to study nursing: “I’m gonna be a nurse, tannie [aunty]” (Georgina, LM#6). Georgina was aware that she would “study for four years” (Georgina, LM#8), but seemed to have no concept of entry requirements, or what the training would involve (Georgina, LM#298 & 300). In both her life-map and possible-self interview, Georgina leapt from leaving school to working as a qualified nurse, with no conceptualization of the processes that might take place between these two points (LM#8 & 12; researcher’s field notes). Further, Georgina’s subjects at school did not seem to be appropriate to a career in nursing as she was taking tourism, consumer and business studies (Georgina, LM#221). When asked about application processes and funding Georgina (LM#56, 132 & 138) said that the programme manager and social worker were attending to these matters, but she did know of the private bursary opportunity. In contrast to Denise,
who was making strategic use of the private bursary programme, Georgina’s understanding of it was vague:

- “It’s that uncles, neh tannie [not so, aunty]? They can help you tannie, they can help you start to study further. All you have to do tannie is just do your best tannie and work hard tannie, and they will help you with everything” (Georgina, LM#34).

Kerry (LM#48) said that she was going to attend a “skill centre”, but when asked to talk more about it she replied, “I don’t know because we don’t go there” (Kerry, LM#52). Her aspiration was “to make stuff. Clothes and other stuff. To be learning lots of stuff” (Kerry, LM#68), but that was the extent of her input, across all the interviews. It seemed that Kerry’s social worker had made the suggestion and was managing the application process: “because Aunty [SW] asked me if it was alright with me to go and study here by the [skill centre], and then I said yes” (Kerry, LM#54). Kerry (LM#56) was not averse to the suggestion, saying, “I want to go [to the skill centre]” and her ambition was to become a fashion designer and make wedding dresses (Kerry, LM#44 & 70; possible-me tree drawing), but her understanding of her ambition was vague. When asked what she thought she might need in order to become a fashion designer she replied, “To know the stuff. How to use the machines. I will learn the stuff at school, and maybe they are going to learn me when I am here [at skill centre]” (Kerry, LM#76).

Although Jean-Paul (PS#119) initially said he had “no idea” what he wanted to study after school, as he progressed through the interviews over the course of three weeks, it transpired that he did have a career idea, but was vague on the details. His stated ambition was to be a project manager, although he was unclear on required subjects and entry requirements (Jean-Paul, PS#4). His ambition to be a project manager seemed to be based entirely on the fact that his father had been in construction (Jean-Paul, PS#115). He had a nebulous back-up plan to join the Navy, but this was based largely on his view of himself as interested in fitness (Jean-Paul, LM#6), rather than on a concrete idea of what the Navy might have to offer in the way of careers, and how he would meet their criteria:

- “…because the thing is I like training and fitness and probably over there [in the Navy] you’re most probably gonna do it, coz it’s the Navy I guess. And ja, that’s like one of my strongest points, fitness” (Jean-Paul, LM#6).

Jean-Paul (LM#28) also saw himself as a financial investor or speculator, and as a famous soccer player (Jean-Paul, PS#154; possible-me tree drawing). He spoke a lot about Ronaldo as his inspiration for this ambition, but his motivation was “money; big money” (Jean-Paul, PS#168).
While this group of young people had broad ideas, and their planning was confined to global statements concerning doing their best and trying hard, Thandi had unformed plans that seemed to be grounded in her ideas that she might be good at something or it might be interesting:

- “I think I love to talk to people and I would describe myself as a social worker. I think I can be a good social worker to other kids or people” (Thandi, PS#16).
- “I think being a teacher is nice” (Thandi, PS#60).

Thandi’s possible-me tree drawing indicated that she would like to be an economist. When asked about her possible self as an economist, Thandi (PS#138) said “I don’t even like it [as a school subject]”. Her interest in this career was vague. She went on to say that “It’s because I think I can work with things that is happening in South Africa, like, hmmm, exchanging like exchanging rates in South Africa” (Thandi, PS#148). I asked her how she knew about this career and she replied “when you see it in the television it looks really interesting” (Thandi, PS#158). In an earlier interview, Thandi had said quite firmly that she wanted to study economic management, because she was taking “commerce, business economics, accounting and maths” at school (Thandi, LM#62). However she acknowledged that she was not getting good marks in general (Thandi, LM#64), and when asked where she saw herself working with a qualification in economic management her response was again generalized; “I see myself in a business. I see myself working in a company” (Thandi, LM#80). This was as far as her conceptualization went. Thandi (LM#82) said that she didn’t want to be a manager, but when asked what she would rather be she replied, “I don’t know. I really don’t know” (Thandi, LM#86).

When asked where she might study further, Thandi (LM#46) gave very vague responses, saying “I will see where I can find a school”. Thandi seemed to have little personal investment in her future education, saying that she was confident that her CYCC and external social worker would find her a school (college or university) and make the necessary arrangements: “She [external social worker] is going to look for a school for me” (Thandi, LM#58).

It is possible and, quite tempting, to suggest that these less well-formed plans are indicative of the participants’ developmental stage and thus to be expected. One of the developmental tasks of adolescence is forming an identity, and trying on various career options is regarded as part of this process (Feldstein & Miller, 2006; Knox et al., 2000). Girls are, in general, more mature and focussed than boys of the same age (Knox, 2006; Romer, Ravich, Tom, Merrell, & Wesley, 2011), and so one might expect that Jean-Paul, Brian and Jade would have a somewhat more fluid conceptualization of their future career. However, the reality is that for YPLC, the outlook is bleak with regard to tertiary education and employment (Berridge, 2012; Betz, 2010; Dickens, 2016), and CLs cannot afford the
lack the luxury of vague plans. Jade was fortunate in that he had an invested relative who was prepared to assist, not only with the application process but with funding his studies as well, but the other young men who took part in this study were not so well placed; neither of them had reliable family resources who might help them toward their career aspirations. Unfortunately, several of the young women who took part in this study also lacked family resources. In the absence of such resilience-enhancing support, a clear, focussed, informed and well-thought-out career plan, based on well-developed possible selves, becomes imperative as a contributor to resilience, if the CL is not to simply lose their way post discharge.

The literature is very clear that educational attainment and career goals are linked (Adelabu, 2008; Eryilmaz, 2011; Negru-Subtirica & Pop, 2016) and contribute positively to a number of domains, such as behaviour (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2007), well-being (Massey, Gebhardt, & Garnefski, 2009), self-efficacy (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001) and resilience (Newman, 2004; Rajendran & Videka, 2006). The utility of possible selves as a motivator for improved academic achievement and conduct at school is discussed by Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, and Hart-Johnson (2002), Oyserman et al. (2004) and Oyserman et al. (2006). As early as 1994, Skymanski (as cited in Skorikov & Vondracek, 2007, p. 132) argued that career planning should begin in early high school and should incorporate a longitudinal focus. One could suggest that if the YPs’ hoped, expected and feared possible selves were explored and developed earlier in their residency at a CYCC, and programmes were in place that encouraged their active participation in planning for and working towards those possible selves, there might be more commitment on the part of YP to their education.

Active involvement in career planning is recognized in the literature as a significant factor in positive career development (Hirschi et al., 2011). Super (1990) argues that active engagement comprises of planning, exploring, information gathering and learning decision making skills. From their interviews it seems that these YP were not actively involved in their career planning, having vague ideas, little concrete information about course requirements and relying heavily on other people to drive the career processes. This calls into question the sustainability of their career goals post discharge. Career aspirations are strongly influenced by factors in YPs’ ecological contexts, such as their family, community and the wider economy (Aronowitz, 2005; Oyserman, Johnson, & James, 2011). Unfortunately, research shows that YP from lower socio-economic circumstances are more likely to have lower career aspirations to begin with, and to adjust their goals downwards as time passes (Oyserman et al., 2011; Rose & Baird, 2013). These factors are concerning in light of the fact that CLs frequently return to unchanged home circumstances characterized by poverty (Tanur, 2012). The development of possible selves linked to the implementation of career development programmes at
an earlier stage than grades 11 or 12 may prove to be instrumental in mediating post discharge risk factors and contributing towards resilience.

4.3.3. Sub-theme 1.3: ‘Hard work’ and ‘doing my best’

The sub-theme of “hard work” and “doing my best” as a means to achieve goals appeared frequently in the YPs’ narratives (Georgina, LM#88; PS#128 & 130; Kerry, PS#38). Jewel (PS#40) said, “That’s why I must work hard to get me to where I want to be”, and Sandi (LM #90) also spoke of hard work as a means to an end. However these statements were not linked to any kind of strategic planning to make their goals a reality; they were either statements of a rather global intent or descriptors of a personal attribute (Thandi, LM#116). Gonzalez, Stein, Shannonhouse, and Prinstein (2012) suggest that this is not uncommon in marginalized youth; although their aspirations and motivation are present, the ability of such young people to identify the structures and supports that might assist them is missing. Gonzalez et al. (2012) suggest the importance of a proactive approach that reaches out and provides information, planning and support. Similarly, Oyserman et al. (2011) maintain that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds may need interventions that assist them to link their future aspirations to short term goals. The role of SWs, CYCWs, teachers or school counsellors can be viewed as pivotal in facilitating a move from a generalised notion of ‘hard work’ to a more targeted and specific action plan, particularly in light of the value some participants in this study found in attending career days, university open days or using the internet to research career ideas (Denise, PS#58; Georgina, LM#28 & 30; Andrew, LM#125).

However, even though the participants stated that they were prepared to work hard to achieve their goals, a number of constraining factors impacted on their choice and attainment of their ambitions. Section 4.3.4 discusses the constraints of aptitude, opportunity and resources.

4.3.4. Sub-theme 1.4: Constraints to CLs’ career goals

Career goals are constrained by several factors, including the opportunities and resources available to YP when making career choices. Three of the participants, while recognizing their skill in hairdressing (a practical subject that they were taking at school), did not embrace the notion of pursuing it as a career. Pauline, for example, said, “I have hairdressing, but I’m not planning studying at college my hairdressing … I’ve been successful here by the saloon [salon] that I’m working at there by the school. But I don’t want to work at it” (Pauline, LM#10 & 41).

Jewel (LM#30) said that she had wanted to take a different subject at school saying, “when I started in grade 8 the school did put me in hairdressing, so I did learn hairdressing and I couldn’t go back. I couldn’t go to nursing because I’m finishing in hairdressing”. She went on to say that “I know
everything about hairdressing, but I would have liked to learn about the nursing also” (Jewel, LM#28). Similarly, Sandi (LM#140) felt that the choice of subject was made by her social worker: “I don’t really like it but [SW] put me in hairdressing at school”.

The kind of career choices open to all YP are determined by a number of factors: aptitude, ability, opportunities and resources (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000; Rose & Baird, 2013). This is particularly true for YPIC, as they often struggle with developmental delays due to maltreatment prior to their admission to a CYCC (Driscoll, 2011; Horoi & Ost, 2015), and the opportunities available to them are frequently limited to the subjects offered at school. In addition, the resources available to the CYCC to develop YP are constrained in terms of finance, and even transportation to get YP to extra activities that might develop their ideas or capacity (Zetlin et al., 2010). Thus, as illustrated in the quotations above, the notion of having career choices is located within a social structure, wherein economic, institutional and cultural factors constrain career decisions (Payne, 2005). However, it is possible to argue that working with YP to identify and develop their possible selves might serve to streamline services and maximize available resources. The SWs and CYCWs who participated in this study were genuinely invested and concerned about the YPs’ futures, and frustrated by limited resources. Developing possible selves earlier in the care process might serve to enable CYCC staff to match the YPs possible selves to the available resources and utilize them in a more specific and efficient way.

In summing up this section of the chapter it may be said that adolescent goals typically focus on the areas of education and employment, and family related issues (Massey et al., 2009; Rose & Baird, 2013; Zhang, Chen, Yu, Wang, & Nurmi, 2015). In this respect, the YP who participated in this study were no different to their non-cared-for peers. However, lacking their career planning may have been, they all clearly believed in the value of continued education as a means to accessing their bright futures. Their views of their futures also included family, both their families of origin and the families they one day hoped to have for themselves. The YPs’ possible selves were more strongly articulated in respect of the family than their career aspirations, both in terms of their feared and hoped-for possible selves. The next section of this chapter identifies and explores the themes related to family that emerged from the interviews with the participants.

4.4. Theme 2: Family relationships

The YP who took part in this study spoke at length about family, and three themes emerged in relation to family: family as a source of anxiety regarding their futures post-discharge, family as a source of feared possible-self, and their hoped-for possible selves as individuals making their own families. The discussion that follows explores these sub-themes and links them to relevant literature.
4.4.1. Sub-theme 2.1: Family of origin as a source of anxiety for CLs

The YPs’ response to the question, “What are you most anxious about when you think of leaving care?” elicited a number of responses that have been clustered into various sub-themes. The most common response revolved around their concerns about returning home to their families, and the situations and level of support they expected to find. Some spoke of their concerns about finance. Jewel (LM#10) said “outside, some of our parents don’t have money to pay for our college”, a concern echoed by Thandi (LM#40) who said “I do not think that my family will provide for me the money to go and study”. Other participants expressed concerns about other issues. Jewel (LM#161) said her concern was “how will I survive outside. Because outside is not a place that I thought it would be, not like the [CYCC]. There are not really any people that can help me”. Brian (FGYP1#43) and Pauline (FGYP1#41) showed a good grasp of the realities of their home situation when they said:

- “Life is gonna be very tough. Because here at the [CYCC] they make everything that you can get it tomorrow, and to help us with our subjects we’ve got the internet and so, but at home, for the usual stuff I have to wait. I have to be patient and wait” (Brian, FGYP1#43).
- “It’s not easy because my mother is not working and she’s travelling a lot for everything, so I can’t go to her, ‘mother, I need money to go and study further’. So I have to take a gap year to go and work for myself because I know my mother can’t provide” (Pauline, FGYP1#41).

Several participants spoke of returning to unstable home circumstances characterised by alcohol abuse, parental mental illness and instability of residence. Jewel (LM#86 & 88) said “the thing is, they [family] drink a lot, so they fight. My brother and sister, they drinking a lot and then they fighting … My mother also does some drinking”. Nosipho (LM#2) talked about her mother’s mental illness, saying, “My mom is actually sick. Mentally sick. And then sometimes she doesn’t understand me”. Nosipho (LM#66) went on to describe her life before her placement in the CYCC: “Sometimes I had to sleep in the streets with my mom because my step-grandmother was cross with my mom, and my mom was sick”. She also spoke of a recent weekend at home that points to the unchanged nature of the circumstances to which she was going to return at the end of the school year:

- “We have to go from place to place, and at the same time I need to focus on my studies”. … “I didn’t have time to study because of the up and down, and we have to move from this place to another place. It was just crazy” (Nosipho, FGYP1#13 & 17).

Participants also spoke of their fears of being undermined by their families in their quest for further education. Georgina (PS#164) feared that “They [family] will say, you don’t have to study, you can go and work”. Pauline (FGYP1#359) commented that “people [family] that will try to break you down because they can see that you are doing everything to be something in life”… “Like people get jealous because they are seeing you are doing good and stuff” (Pauline, LM#57). Similarly, Georgina
(LM#150) said that “people [family] don’t see my hard work and they are trying to make decision for me”.

These anxieties on the part of the YP are well supported in the literature. The circumstances from which YP were removed often remain unchanged while they are in care (Tanur, 2012). Alcohol abuse and poverty are common features in the lives of their families, and family relationships are frequently dysfunctional (Park et al., 2004; Tanur, 2012). The quotes above reflect that YP experience their families as unhelpful, and even obstructive, towards their aspirations of tertiary education, which is supported by Höjer and Sjöblom (2009) and Driscoll (2013). Parental encouragement and support for post-secondary education are important factors in YPs’ success, or lack thereof (Ceja, 2006; Lent et al., 2000). These are complex factors, influenced by parental levels of education, and socioeconomic status (Bandura et al., 2001; Ojeda & Flores, 2006). Ceja (2006) and Ojeda and Flores (2006) suggest that ‘unhelpful’ parents simply might not have knowledge or understanding of tertiary education processes, and so are unable to help their child to access tertiary education. However, the reality is that poverty is an unrelenting and defining factor in the lives of CLs in the South African context (Tanur, 2012). Henig (2009) suggests that the focus on the part of caregivers, both in the statutory system and in YPs’ families, is frequently that of finding a job rather than developing a career, which serves to stifle CLs’ aspirations. In this respect a well-developed possible-self, with a specific and detailed plan, would contribute to resilience, as it may identify supportive resources and assist CLs to stand firm and overcome this particular barrier, especially in the absence of mandated follow up services for CLs post discharge.

4.4.2. Sub-theme 2.2: Family as a source of feared possible selves

Section 4.3.1 of this discussion focussed on the hoped-for possible selves of the participants and how these might be directing the YPs’ actions toward their future goals. However, when the YP spoke of their families of origin, it was evident that these informed their feared possible selves, which were motivators for their desire for academic success and served to shape their hoped-for possible selves as parents.

Jewel did not want to be like her sisters, whom she felt had not made anything of their lives. She said, “I don’t want to be like my sisters, because they’re getting their school finish. But now they don’t work and they’re at home” (Jewel, LM#80). Georgina’s siblings had, in her view, not taken advantage of the opportunities available to them. “My sister she did get a burs [bursary], but when she was not going to school anymore and they did take that scholarship away” (Georgina, PS#258). Georgina’s other sister also secured a sports bursary as she was a gymnast of some promise, but had failed to use the opportunity (Georgina, PS#262 & 264). Georgina (PS#264) went on to say that “They could now
maybe be teachers or social workers, but they are just sitting at home and doing nothing”. These examples of feared possible selves were motivating forces for Georgina’s determination to finish school and study further. Georgina was most emphatic that “I am not going to be like them, sitting at home and doing nothing”… “It looks for me as if I’m the only one who wants to work” (Georgina, PS#266). Similarly, Kerry’s brother was, in her view, “not very successful” (LM#134) and she cited him as her motivation to continue her education (Kerry, LM#144):

- “Because he got a lot of talent and he could have gone all the way, but he didn’t” … “and he started drinking and smoking [drugs]. And then he started to break into houses and he even went to jail” (Kerry, LM# 136 & 138).

The adults in an YP’s environment play a key role in shaping the YP’s development (Chapin, 2014). According to Hurd, Zimmerman, and Xue (2009), exposure to negative adult behaviours is associated with negative outcomes for adolescents, a position that is supported by Yancey, Grant, Kurosky, Kravitz-Wirtz, and Mistry (2011). Possible selves are regarded as potential and powerful motivators of behaviour and shapers of identity (Dunkel, 2000; Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Markus & Nurius, 1986). In this instance, the feared possible selves of the participants, which are informed by the negative role models of family members, could be used to shape hoped-for possible selves that are unlike the negative role models. Identifying and facilitating exposure to positive role models, such as other family members, teachers or peers, can exert a protective effect that contributes to the development of resilience, and provide opportunities to develop positive hoped-for possible selves based on the example of the prosocial role model (Hurd et al., 2009).

The third family sub-theme that emerged from the data related to the participants hoped-for selves as married with a family. These possible selves are especially poignant, as they are informed by the YPs’ feared-possible selves, based on their experience of their own parents and being parented. The following discussion explores the YPs’ hopes for marriage, and the kind of spouse and parent they would like to be, followed by a discussion of the literature that speaks to CLs’ relationships with partners and parenthood. The discussion concludes by suggesting that the YPs’ hoped-for possible selves as spouses and parents may be linked to their hopes for continued education and used to motivate their behaviour towards delayed parenthood.

### 4.4.3. Sub-theme 2.3: Hoped for possible-self as married with family

The sub-themes of marriage and family recurred in the data. Crystal (LM#4), Denise (LM#24), Sandi (LM#56; life-map drawing) and Thandi (LM#98) all mentioned marriage as part of their bright futures. Of the four young men interviewed, only one said he did not plan to marry or have children (Jean Paul, LM#188 & 190). However, the participants mentioned being married almost in passing.
In contrast, the sub-theme of being a parent emerged quite strongly during the course of the interviews. No questions were asked about the circumstances that resulted in their placement in a CYCC, but the content some of the participants’ possible selves speaks movingly and eloquently to this.

Denise had entered the CYCC at the age of 14. She volunteered information about the reasons for her placement in a conversation we had after one of the interviews, which were touchingly reflected in her statements below:

- “I think about like my kids. Do I want my kids to have everything and then lose everything”…“Or do I want them to like have everything they need and like have it for the rest of their life, until they like out of my house”…“I wouldn’t like my kids to be ending up in a children’s home” (Denise, LM#436, 438 & 440).

Her experience and feared possible-self as a motivator was clearly seen in her statement that “I think that will help me like be focussed and like you know try my best and finishing [her education]. So, ja” (Denise, LM#442).

Brian and Jade spoke of themselves as fathers. Brian’s possible-me tree drawing reflects his hoped-for possible-self as “a father that cares for his family”. When exploring this with Brian, he was very specific about what a caring father does. Brian said that a priority for a father is “to look after your children, ‘cause that’s a big responsibility”…“the children must be in school every day and they must have lunch and they must eat at home. They must see that they do their homework” (Brian, PS#68, 74). Brian also described functions of a caring father as attending sport fixtures, assisting with fundraising and being making sure that one’s children cope at school (Brian, PS#92 & 94). Brian had this to say about the role of a caring father; “just make sure in your family when there is problems, sort them out. Then you support everyone” (Brian, PS#98). When asked what supporting everyone meant to him, Brian (PS#100) said “always be there for them”.

Jade (PS#145) said he wanted to be “the best parent for them [his children]”. In his view a best parent had the following qualities:

- “If they ask me uhm anything, I will do it for them. I will give them a great education. Hmm, I won’t beat them”… “When I return home from work I would give them a hug and a kiss and I would say that you are my best children, I love you so much”… “I will show them the love I never had from a father” (Jade, life-map drawing; PS#149 & 153).

Jade also had very clear ideas about how he would like to treat his wife. “I tell her I love her. You are the best wife and the prettiest woman in the world and I love you very much” (Jade, PS#163). When I asked him why he felt these things were important, Jade replied, “Because I would give my children
the love I never had. That’s why” (Jade, PS#165). Jade’s life-map drawing also stated that “they [his children] are gonna have a father and mother to look after them”.

Andrew had very definite ideas about his possible-self as a husband. His possible-me tree drawing said, “To love and care for my wife and children at all costs”, and in the interview he spoke of having “a family full of love” (Andrew, LM#71). Andrew’s concerns were focussed on his future marriage relationship and he said “I don’t want to fall to temptation and divorce. Yeah, that’s what I really fear, the loss of my wife” (Andrew, PS#73).

The literature that discusses the family life that CLs create for themselves is limited and, unfortunately, not encouraging. Courtney and Dworsky (2006) and Wade (2008) found that CLs are more likely to be co-habiting or married at a young age than their non-cared-for peers. It may be suggested that CLs are drawn to relationships with partners in an attempt to create a sense of belonging, find an alternate source of support and security and increase their sense of well-being (Bond, 2010; Manteuffel, Stephens, Songheimer, & Fischer, 2008; Wade, 2008). However, the quality of the relationships is frequently poor; they are often volatile, characterised by domestic violence, and relationship breakdown is common (Goodkind et al., 2011; Wade, 2008).

Similarly, Stein (2008) and Dworsky and Courtney (2010) note that early parenthood is common in CLs. Stein (2008) remarks that many CLs need and want to create a sense of family and belonging, but their experiences prior to being placed in care compromise their ability to do so. Wade (2008) also notes early parenthood in CLs, and discusses this in the context of the risk factors that are prevalent among CLs, for example, socio-economic circumstances of the family of origin, low educational attainment and unemployment. However, Wade (2008) and Stein (2002) also note some positive factors associated with parenthood for CLs. Wade (2008) found that parenthood brought CLs “considerable joy and pride” (Wade, 2008, p. 50), while Stein (2002) argues that parenthood provides a sense of maturity and adult identity. Further, parenthood often brought about an improvement in relationships with CLs family of origin, their parents rallying to providing support in terms of babysitting, some assistance with material things such as buying clothing and providing general reassurance (Biehal, Clayden, Stein, & Wade, 1995; Stein, 2002; Wade, 2008).

While these positive factors are encouraging and may even be regarded as evidence of resilience, it cannot be denied that early parenthood, particularly in marginalized groups of YP, is identified as a risk factor for the YP and their child (Berzin et al., 2014; Wade, 2008). The nature of the relationships between partners, compounded by early parenthood, may be seen as contributing factors to the placement of CLs’ children in CYCCs. The intergenerational cycle of family placements that prompted my interest in this area of research (Bond, 2010) is well documented in the literature (del
Valle et al., 2011; Malia et al., 2008; Yates, 2001), and was referred to by the SWs and CYCWs who participated in this study. One social worker said, “You tell them, I’m not going to raise your kids” (Francis, FGSW#24), while another felt it would be “an added success if we can break that cycle, because I don’t want their children coming into the children’s home” (Alex, FGSW#23). In the same vein one of the CYCWs remarked, “Ja, [Yes] and then that baby end up in the institution. Most of the time that happen” (Irene, FGCYW#30).

Encouragingly, several of the YP in this study were able to identify positive role models of marital relationships and parental roles (Andrew, PS#85 & 89; Jade, PS#167 & 169; Denise, LM#363 & 371) that informed their ideas of how a partner, parent and family should be. Positive role models are known to be contributors to the development of resilience (Yancey et al., 2011). It may be suggested that such role models could be used in developing CLs’ hoped-for possible selves as married with children, and linked to their educational and career possible selves. This, in turn, might serve to direct CLs’ behaviour towards delaying parenthood and thus improve the outcomes of the CLs and their hoped-for marriages and children.

In conclusion, this section of the chapter has discussed the possible selves of the participants in terms of family. Three themes from the data have been explored: family as a source of anxiety for the participants, family as a source of feared possible selves and their hoped-for possible selves as married with children. The YP voiced anxiety about their family’s ability to support them in their quest for further education and that their goals may be undermined by pressure to find employment rather than pursue a career. This was followed by the theme of family as a source of feared possible selves which may be used to motivate and direct behaviour towards achieving educational and career goals, in order to avoid becoming like the family members identified, and may contribute to breaking the cycle of CYCC placements observed and documented in this field, as higher education (and increased socioeconomic status as a result) has a positive impact on the life chances of CLs and their children. Finally, the theme of hoped-for possible selves as married with their own family was discussed and linked to literature that explores the outcomes for CLs in terms of relationships and parenting. Positive role models of the YPs’ hoped-for possible selves may be used to reinforce their hopes, linked to their educational and career goals and used to motivate and direct YPs’ behaviour towards educational achievement and delayed parenthood.

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6 These quotes are referenced as follows: participant pseudonym, Focus Group Social Workers (FGSW) line (#) number.
7 These quotes are referenced as follows: participant pseudonym, Focus Group Child and Youth Care Workers (FGCYCW) line (#) number.
The discussion now moves onto an unexpected theme to emerge from the data, that of helping others. Although there is limited literature that explores this topic, it is nonetheless a valuable concept, and, if developed, may be useful in facilitating a sense of purpose and motivating behaviour in CLs, thus linking to resilience and possible selves.

4.5. **Theme 3: Helping others**

The YPs’ views of their bright futures also encompassed helping others. This theme emerged strongly in the data, being mentioned by eight of the eleven participants, across interviews. This was an interesting and unexpected theme, and there is little literature on the topic of CLs as helpers. The theme of helping others is linked to the Circle of Courage concept of generosity, and is a concept that contributes towards resilience (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Jackson, 2014). The notion of helping others could be developed into a hoped-for possible-self and used as a motivator of behaviour linked towards educational and career goals. Two sub-themes emerged from this data: helping the community and helping family.

4.5.1. **Sub-theme 3.1: Helping the community**

The sub-theme of helping others appeared early in the interview process. Nosipho (LM#6) was the first participant interviewed, and made mention of helping others early in her first interview saying that she saw herself “Taking care of the needy”, going on to say, “As for me, I want to do something for my community” (Nosipho, LM#6 & 37). Thandi (LM#14) said that she wanted to be like her social worker, saying “I really want to be like her. I also want to help others”.

Nosipho’s and Thandi’s ideas of helping others were generalized, but Jewel (PS#4) was more specific about how she wanted to help others:

- “I want to finish school, and then when I am done, I will help other people, like giving them stuff, like giving them soup or giving them clothes and helping them with books or teaching them things that they didn’t know. That I want to do” (Jewel, PS#4).

It appeared that Jewel’s motivation to help others was based on her own experience of life in her community and a feared possible-self:

- “There are some children who doesn’t have a home. Their mothers don’t really care about them. Then I look at them and I think maybe if I wasn’t in the children’s home, maybe I would also be like that” (Jewel, LM#108).
Similarly, Sandi (LM#56 & 148) was also quite specific in the kind of help she wanted to offer:

- “I really want to help the other people that are struggling and have problems at their homes”… “There is so many people who is struggling to, maybe with the children, who really don’t want to do something. So I would give them advice how to like be. They mustn’t let their children end up like us in the children’s home” (Sandi, LM#56 &148).

Jade (PS#48 & 52; possible-me tree drawing) wanted to help YP in his community by forming his own soccer club for troubled youth. “I wanna see the children who always get into trouble. I want to help them and see what they can do with their talent” (Jade, PS#48). Jade’s own experience of the benefits of belonging to a soccer club and his love of soccer were the motivators for his idea of how he might help others. He clearly appreciated the structure and discipline that his coach brought to his life. He said his coach insisted on “homework first. You must have manners and respect your team mates” (Jade, PS#72). Jade (PS#88, 90 & 92) went on to say, “He’s a nice coach”… “but these days he trains us very hard”… “And if one guys makes a mistake, he punish the whole team”. Jade planned to structure his own soccer club on the principles he had learned from the club he currently belonged to, saying that club members “must be at the gym everyday”… “they must be at practice every day”… “they must have manners”… “And they must do their homework before coming to practice” (Jade, PS#60, 62, 64 & 66).

Andrew (LM#169; PS#99) wanted to motivate people in his community to lead different lives, saying that “motivating the people; their lives in the community are not good”… “motivating others also, and helping others who are less fortunate than me” was his focus. He also wanted to provide in a material sense for his community, saying “maybe open up a school, and maybe opening up a few jobs, or a few courses” (Andrew, PS#99). Andrew (PS#136) also wanted to give back to the CYCC, saying “I want to come back and give something from my success. To come back and just help them to be motivated. I would just like to carry it on and give back to the children”.

The desire to help as a motivation for helping among care leavers is noted by Hass and Graydon (2009) and Melkman, Mor-Salwo, Mangold, Zeller, and Benbenishty (2015), and the possible selves described by the YP in this study clearly evidenced a desire to help. The development of these hoped-for possible selves could be facilitated by encouraging YPIC to volunteer, which, according to Crocetti et al. (2014), contributes to positive development and may thus be regarded as contributing to the development of resilience. Volunteerism among youth is driven by socialization forces, such as the family, school and church, which promote and provide support and encouragement for volunteering activities (Haski-Leventhal, Ronel, York, & Ben-David, 2008; Webber, 2011). Given that the CYCC, to a degree, takes the place of family, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the CYCC could also be a socialization force in terms of volunteering.
Prouteau and Wolff (2008) note that motives for volunteering may include enhancing one’s human capital, increasing employability and broadening social networks of individuals who may be able to assist volunteers to achieve their goals. While this motivation did not emerge from the interviews with the YP in this study, it could be argued that these might be happy by-products of volunteering activities for YPIC. Identifying the hoped-for possible-self as helper and developing this by encouraging volunteering among YPIC can contribute to their resilience in multiple ways. Volunteering among youth is associated with a number of positive benefits that can be linked to the development of resilience (Zimmerman et al., 2013).

Volunteering is known to have a positive impact on academic success, to improve communication and interpersonal skills, increase decision making capability and decrease behavioural problems and the likelihood of early pregnancy (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2008; Shannon, Robertson, Morrison, & Werner, 2009). When YP engage in volunteer activities it improves their self-concept and provides opportunities for skills building and experiencing success (McBride, Johnson, Olate, & O’Hara, 2011; Zimmerman et al., 2013). YP who are involved in volunteering are exposed to positive social values, which are reinforced by the work they are doing. (Melkman et al., 2015; Shannon et al., 2009). Engaging in volunteer work encourages a feeling that one can make a difference in the world (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Bockern, 2002), which is important in a population that is frequently disempowered. Further, the people the YP might engage with provide opportunities for positive adult-youth relationships and opportunities for the development of natural mentor relationships (McBride et al., 2011; Southwick, Morgan, Vythilingam, & Charney, 2005). Thus, identifying and developing a hoped-for possible-self as a helper by encouraging volunteer activities has the potential to be a significant contributor to resilience in YPIC.

The other aspect of helping to emerge from the interviews was that of helping family. A discussion of this possible-self is contained in the section that follows, and is explored in terms of the appropriateness and potential consequences of this possible-self for CLs.

4.5.2. Sub-theme 3.2: Helping family

The sub-theme of helping family also occurred across the data set. Georgina (LM#10 & 16; life-map drawing) said “I wanna buy my mother a big house” (Georgina, LM#10), going on to say “I want my small sister to stay with me. And I’m going to take her to school every morning. And I want her to do well at school” (Georgina, LM#16). Jewel (PS#82) wanted to help her mother who was raising her sister’s child: “My sister’s child she didn’t go to primary school. My mother didn’t have spare money. So I started thinking when I’m working, when I’m having money I want to help her with my sister’s child.” Jade (PS#227) spoke of helping his family, saying that his motivation to become a
The welder was to make money in order to “get better things” and to “give for my mother and my aunt” (Jade, PS# 225 & 233).

However, Brian (PS#164 & 168) saw quite clearly that helping his family might compromise his future:

- “Now maybe I’m the only one working and my sister is still in school and I must pay her school fees, school clothes, like keep the house right like that. And I must send them money every time. All of that” (Brian, PS#164).

When asked why that would make his future “not so nice with my family” (Brian, possible-me tree drawing) he replied that “It’s gonna look like I’m neglecting my family I’m with; my children” (Brian, PS#168).

The idea of helping family, while superficially pointing to generosity on the part of the participants, may not necessarily have positive connotations. Georgina’s (PS#54, 56 & 58) narrative reflected a desire to please, and an ownership of responsibility that was inappropriate. She wanted to buy her mother a house because “I’m thankful for everything she done for me” (Georgina, LM#215). Likewise, feeling a responsibility to help a parent with a sibling’s child (Jewel, PS#82) points to a reversal of role responsibility (Melkman et al., 2015). Driscoll (2013) and Sulimani-Aidan et al. (2013) comment on this tendency of CLs of expecting to provide support, rather than to receive. The pressure to assist family members may compromise the CLs’ future, as the goal of further education may be subsumed in the pressure (internal or external) to provide support to their families. It may be argued that the value of a well-developed career plan that utilizes hoped-for and feared possible selves as motivators, reinforced with follow up support services, would be to contribute to resilience by empowering CLs to see further into the future and resist the pressure to secure any employment in order to be able to provide for their family.

4.5.3. Conclusion

The discussion thus far has addressed themes relating to the research objective of establishing how CLs see their futures. The YP who participated in this study saw their futures as bright. Their primary concerns were education and family, and all had the stated aim of furthering their studies post-discharge. Their knowledge and plans in this regard varied in terms of development; only two participants had well-thought-out and researched plans, while most had vague plans, underpinned by the ill-defined concept of working hard to achieve their goals. Actively engaging YPIC in life and career planning earlier than grades 11 or 12, and developing their possible selves in the domains of education and career, may serve to improve their focus and the outcomes for CLs as they exit the statutory system.
The bright futures of this group of YP included helping others; their communities and families. A few of the participants ideas were generalized, but some expressed quite specific ideas of putting their nieces through school, assisting their parents financially and contributing to the wellness of their communities by starting a sports club or assisting with parenting skills. These hoped for possible selves can be developed by encouraging YP to volunteer, which may contribute towards resilience across a number of domains, such as increasing social capital and encouraging a sense of making a difference in the world.

Finally, the participants also spoke of three aspects of family. They expressed anxieties about the circumstances to which they will return and the absence of support they anticipate. Some even spoke of their family being obstructive to their goal of further study. Several participants described family members as sources of feared possible selves, and it was clear that these were motivators for their desire to do better than their parents or siblings. These feared possible selves may also be used in interventions with YPIC, and could be linked to educational goals, potentially contributing to breaking the cycle of family placements in CYCCs. With regard to family, the YP spoke movingly of their hopes for establishing their own family one day, and had very clear ideas of what a spouse or parent should or should not do. This also has the potential to be explored as a possible-self motivator to break the cycle of statutory placements, and could be linked with educational/career hoped-for possible selves to improve outcomes for CLs.

The chapter now moves on to discuss aspects of resilience that emerged from the interviews with the CLs who took part in this study.

4.6. **Theme 4: Resilience factors**

The theme of resilience is discussed in terms of two sub-themes: resilience factors identified from interviews with care leavers and SWs’ and CYCW’s understanding of resilience. The interview questions for the YP did not ask about resilience directly, but were structured so that resilience topics could emerge as part of the conversation. A number of contributors to resilience emerged from the data, and the discussion that follows focusses on the categories of awareness of one’s own behaviour, involvement in extramural activities, experience of success, natural mentors and role models, and work experience. The sub-theme of how the SWs view the resilience of YPIC is also included, as it contrasts significantly to the resilience factors that emerged from the YPs interviews, and may offer an insight into why possible selves and resilience are overlooked by SWs who work with this particular group of YP.
4.6.1. Sub-theme 4.1: Resilience factors identified from interviews with CLs

The interviews with the CLs were encouraging in that they revealed a number of resilience factors. The resilience factors of CLs’ awareness and insight into their own behaviour, their involvement in extramural activities, experiences of success, exposure to role models and mentors and work experience will be presented in the sections below.

4.6.1.1. Category 4.1a: CLs’ awareness and insight into their own behaviour

Although the category of YPs’ awareness and insight emerged from only two participants’ interviews, it is nevertheless included in the findings, as it may speak to the potential of possible selves to contribute to reflexivity and thus to resilience.

Jade, a participant with a traumatic background prior to admission to the CYCC, and a troubled and difficult stay while he was in care, showed an interesting level of awareness of his own behaviour when he said, “his [speaking of himself] school work is better than his behaviour” (Jade, LM#38), and “he’s [speaking of himself] a gentleman, but his behaviour must be broke, and his anger must come down” (Jade, LM#56). He went on to say that “I’m getting angry fast, so I tell the people I get angry fast” (Jade, LM#62).

Similarly, Andrew (LM#99) spoke about anger as a problem behaviour, giving the example of breaking a friend’s arm during an argument. Both of these young men used the strategy of walking away when they felt angry (Jade, LM#70; Andrew, LM#103), and both acknowledged the depth of their anger, Jade (LM#74, 76 & 78) said “that anger, I don’t want to get angry”…”cause I could kill someone”…”Really, I could kill, someone” (Jade, LM#74, 76 & 78). Andrew (LM#103) said of himself when angry, “I just do anything that I do not even know what I’m doing, because of that anger”.

However, the difference between these participants was their insight into their responsibility for their behaviour. Jade adopted a position of ‘victim’ and being unfairly blamed when things go wrong for him. He said “they do not like me at school. It’s always me there [in trouble] in class”…”and I didn’t even start it” (Jade, FGYP2#14), a sentiment he repeated again (Jade, FGYP2#20). In contrast, Andrew (LM#97) spoke of personal responsibility and accountability for his actions when he said “I need to know what I am doing. I am able to face the consequences of the things that I have done, all the things that I am doing”. Alvord and Grados (2005) identify this kind of self-awareness as a key protective factor in developing resilience, and it is possible that self-awareness may be developed through reflexivity. Winkler (2014) suggests that reflexivity is a core component of resilience, as it enables the individual to develop a sense of autonomy. She develops this by stating that autonomous
individuals can acknowledge and reflect on their own behaviour, and can understand and relate to the behaviour of others. Winkler (2014) locates her argument within a psychodynamic paradigm, and thus quality of attachments are considered of primary importance. However, the capacity to acknowledge and reflect on one’s behaviour and the ability to relate to others might both be facilitated in the development of possible selves. Using possible selves might provide a rich opportunity for YP to develop the capacity to consider their own behaviour, how this might be understood by others and what the outcomes might be (Carey & Martin, 2007; Olsson et al., 2003).

Thus it can be argued that possible selves can improve YPs’ self-regulatory capacity and social competence, as both require awareness of self and responsiveness to others (Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010; Olsson et al., 2003). Buckner, Mezzacappa, and Beardslee (2003) assert that self-regulation is a defining feature of resilient YP and is important throughout the lifespan. In light of the problematic outcomes associated with CLs, it may be suggested that every effort to encourage self-regulation and develop social competence should be made while YP are in the CYCC. Jade (PS#123, 125 & 131) was clearly learning about self-regulation and social competence through his involvement with the soccer club (see section 4.6.1.2 below) Involvement in extramural activities is known to contribute to resilience (Brooks, 2006; Gilligan, 2007), and several of the YP who participated in this study were involved in different extramural activities. Their experiences of these, and how these contribute to their resilience and possible selves is discussed in the section that follows.

4.6.1.2. Category 4.1b: CLs’ involvement in extramural activities

Involvement in extramural activities is noted in the literature as a contributor to resilience among YPIC (Gilligan, 2007). Several of the YP who took part in this study were involved in extra activities. Denise (LM#18 & 186), although not currently involved in any extra activities as she wanted to focus on her final year studies, had been involved as chairperson of a youth group, and modelling. Jean-Paul (LM#70, 72 & 76) cited an impressive list of extra activities he was involved with at school, in addition to his involvement with a football club (Jean-Paul, LM#31).

Andrew (interview#54, 56, 108 & 110) was also involved in a range of extra activities, and described a two-day beach hike and a recent canoeing tournament as great adventures. He and his canoeing instructor were planning to take part in a four-day canoeing event along the coast, which was clearly an event Andrew was looking forward to (Andrew, interview#50). His account of his first time out on a canoe was a narrative of perseverance, overcoming challenge and success:

- “My first day on a canoe was a hectic day, it was windy and we had to swim to the middle of the lake and back, so I swim 500m and back. And the water had waves and I kept swimming and I was tired immediately, then the coach said, ‘Here’s a paddle and a boat –
go! I couldn’t even balance I just went, and I almost got to 500 meters of paddling and I fell into the water. I got back on and I paddled again and I turn around and I fell again! And then I got back on again, but I fell many times, but I loved it.” (Andrew, interview#46)

- “And in my age group I came second, no it’s not second, I came third” (Andrew, interview#54)

The value of these extramural activities seemed to be viewed differently by the different participants. Jean-Paul regarded his involvement in extra activities quite strategically, seeing them as contributors to his good reputation at school. “I have a good name at school” (Jean-Paul, LM#64), and “and I do a lot of stuff. I’m involved there at school. And people like me, coz when we do shows, people greet me by name” (Jean-Paul, LM#72). The concept of having a good name recurred in Jean-Paul’s life-map interview, and he regarded having a good name as a something that would stand him in good stead in the future:

- “Because I mean, I’ve got a good name with [the director of the CYCC] and she always tells me, like, whenever you need something, when you go out there, you’ve got my back [meaning, I’ve got your back]. You can just holler, and, yeah” (Jean-Paul, LM#172).

Andrew (interview #46, 48, 54, 56 & 110) saw the benefit of his involvement in extra activities from a life lesson perspective. He felt that extra activities “teach you to have discipline and obey authority and don’t take it for granted. And be friendly to other people and while you are doing your work have fun and enjoy what you do” (Andrew, interview#112). Andrew also used his extra activities as a means of avoiding gang activity in his community during home visits:

- “When they would like compete in the gangs and stuff I would just go to the soccer team and just play there, and when I finish playing I would jog just to keep myself busy. Or I would go canoeing” (Andrew, interview#42).

Andrew used his participation in sport as a proactive coping mechanism, to avoid being drawn into the gang and drug culture in his community, demonstrating individual resilience and the capacity to use the resources in his environment to his advantage. These decisions were informed by his hoped-for possible-self as an individual with a future that extended beyond what his community offers. He appeared to be focussed and determined, saying, “I already have a vision and a mission. A vision where I see myself and my mission. And my mission will be to take the steps that I am going towards my future” (Andrew, LM#41). He went on to say that he did not want to be part of the community, “because we lead a rough life. There is no life there just sitting down [being unemployed]” (Andrew, LM#45).

Andrew’s participation in sport had also had an unexpected benefit for him, as his sport coach found paid work for Andrew to do on an occasional basis (Andrew, interview#82), pointing to the value of extra activities beyond their obvious recreational function.
Denise regarded her experience as the chairperson of a youth group as contributing to her skills in terms of organizing and networking. She described her responsibilities as follows: “running the whole group every Saturday when we have the meetings” (Denise, LM#213), “thinking of stuff we need, like thinking up new ideas” (Denise, LM#215), “going out and getting sponsors” (Denise, LM#223) and “[organizing] beach walks, visits to old age homes, visits to children’s homes”… “taking out food to any other institution” (Denise, LM#223 & 225).

Jade’s involvement with a soccer club was contributing toward his social competence. Jade owned his anger management challenges, and he was sometimes able to apply the discipline he was learning on the soccer field in his classroom context. When asked if he used the skills he learned from soccer elsewhere he replied, “At school” (Jade, PS#121). I asked him what skills he used at school and he said, “respect”… “self-control” (Jade, PS#123 & 125) and “I don’t talk back to teachers” (Jade, PS#131).

Involvement in extra mural activities is a noted contributor to resilience in a number of spheres. Hollingworth (2012) discusses the role that school based extramural activities play in contributing to academic success, suggesting that participation in school-based activities results in better performance at school and is associated with long-term educational success. Hollingworth (2012) also observes that taking part in extra activities at school fosters attachment to the school. The combination of attachment to school and improved performance might be useful in addressing the challenge of truancy, described by the SWs and CYCWs, as well as contributing to the development of possible selves and resilience.

However, extra activities are not only confined to school-based extracurricular activities. Community activities, such as belonging to sports clubs, church groups or the Scouts, are also avenues of participation for YP (Howard & Johnson, 2000). If these are located within the YP’s community of origin, participation may also serve to ease the transition from care, as the CL will have connections and contacts with a prosocial group within their community. Participating in extra activities serves to develop resilience, as it expands the friendship circles of YPIC to include peers who are not in care, widens their social networks and their range of possible selves (Gilligan, 1999, 2008; Hollingworth, 2012). Gilligan (1999) and Hollingworth (2012) cite case examples of YPIC whose participation in extra activities created hoped-for possible selves and led to opportunities for these to be realized.

Involvement in extra activities also contributes to the development of social competence, which is a key resilience factor for CLs as they transition from care (Dixon & Stein, 2005). Social competence is described as emotional regulation, problem-solving, decision-making, interpersonal and positive communication skills and assertiveness (Brooks, 2006). Social competence is critical for functioning
in any sphere of life – at school, socially, in relationships, in the world of work – and is an area of concern for YPIC and CLs. Exposure to prosocial peers who are not in the statutory system, and learning the reflective and social skills necessary to function as part of a group, are significant factors in developing social competence (Hass & Graydon, 2009; Hollingworth, 2012). Developing social competence in YPIC through their involvement in extra activities provides opportunities to develop expected possible selves as able to behave in a socially appropriate way. This in turn leads to inclusion, acceptance and increased self-esteem. These positive factors reinforce the expected possible self; the “upward spiral” of positive emotion referred to by Hutchinson and Lema (2009, p. 22). The expected possible self becomes a driver of self-regulation (Layous, Neslon, & Lyubomirsky, 2013; Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010), and resilience is fostered in the presence of this expected possible self, as the experiences and practice of social competence improve YPs’ outcomes.

Encouraging YPs’ involvement in extra activities may contribute towards their resilience as they transition out of care and into the fields of tertiary education or employment. Lau, Hsu, Acosta, and Hsu (2013) suggest that YP who are involved in extra activities are more likely to see themselves as employable, which is the creation of an expected possible self. In addition, involvement in extra activities is associated with positive factors, such as decreased risk-taking behaviours or school dropout, and is perceived as an indicator of leadership and responsibility (Lau et al., 2013). These elements can be used to create a “narrative of employability” (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013, p. 25), in a tactical effort to increase YPs’ employability, or chances of success when applying for further education, in competitive environments; an example of making use of available resources as a resilience factor.

Extra activities are also opportunities for YP to experience success. The YP who participated in this study were asked about their experiences of success and, encouragingly, they identified a number of successes in several areas. Their experiences of success in the realm of sport, public speaking and education and how these link to resilience and possible selves are discussed in the section that follows.

4.6.1.3. Category 4.1c: CLs’ experience of success

A heart-warming category to emerge strongly from the data was that of YPs’ experience of success. It was also encouraging that the YP identified successes across various domains, particularly sporting achievements, public speaking and success at school.

Sporting achievements were mentioned by several participants as examples of success. Sandi (LM#2 & 6) cited being part of a school netball team and taking part in a netball tournament away from home as examples of success. Jade (LM#152, 156 & 162) presented his achievements on the football pitch
as examples of success. It may be argued that for Jade, although he did not relate it in this way, the success was not only in respect of his ability on the field, but also successfully managing his anger while on the pitch. He provided an example of this success when he told me of an incident on the field that made him angry, and when I asked him how he responded he replied, “I just hold [the anger] for myself and I said ‘I can do better’. And I play, play, play, and they score again, then I was happy” (Jade, LM#154).

Another three participants felt successful after taking part in public speaking events. Georgina (LM#237) was asked by her SW to speak on behalf of the CYCC at a sponsor’s event. This represented a significant challenge for Georgina, as she identified herself as “so shy” (Georgina, LM#239). In spite of her reluctance, she persevered and said that afterwards, “I feel so proud of myself” (Georgina, LM#243). When encouraged to explore how this experience might be of help to her in the future, she was able to say that “maybe next time I won’t be so shy” (Georgina, LM#251), and that she would be able to apply the learning when she goes to university (Georgina, LM#257).

Jean-Paul (PS#44) and Nosipho (LM#32) also talked about speaking in public, either at school events or on behalf of the CYCC. However, their experience of this as success was not related to overcoming a personal hurdle, but in their understanding of public speaking as a way to ‘market’ themselves to CYCC sponsors. Nosipho (LM#32) seemed to enjoy this aspect of her life saying, I usually go when there’s functions and do public speaking, and I usually associate with business people. They are the big sponsors and I get to talk to them”. She was quite clear about the strategic nature of her involvement in this aspect of the CYCC as she went on to say that “I think that’s a big advantage for me when I’m older. And they’re more than willing to help me get the things I want” (Nosipho, LM#33). Likewise, Jean-Paul had the following to say about his public speaking opportunities as a representative of the CYCC:

- “So we go with her to like functions and charity functions and stuff like that. But sometimes we have to do a speech – an unprepared speech – and I have to talk about why it is and how is it and all that. And over there I like meet people and over there I like kind of like do business with them, because I am not afraid to speak to them” (Jean-Paul, PS#44).

The capacity to elicit positive responses from their environments, and skill at obtaining what they need from other people, is cited by Hass and Graydon (2009) as an experience of success and source of resilience. van Breda (2015, pp. pp 329- 330) refers to these skills as “networking people for goal attainment” and “contextualized responsiveness”, and discusses their contribution to CLs’ resilience after they have exited the statutory system and are attempting to make their way in the world outside. These emerging skills on the part of the YP who took part in this study could be identified through
the use of possible-self activities, and developed while the YP are in care in an effort to maximize their life chances once out of the CYCC, and thus contribute to their resilience.

It was particularly encouraging, in light of the poor educational outcomes associated with being in care, that several of participants cited success at school when asked to think of an example of success. For some success at school was being skilled in a practical subject (Jewel, LM#52; Jade, PS#239). For others it was achieving good marks (Brian, PS#202 & 204). Jean-Paul (LM#130 & 132) was very proud of his distinctions in various subjects. Similarly, Nosipho (LM#50) said:

- “Well, my first time in high school I came in the top five. And I’m like, WOW! Is that ME! And, ja, I did very great and I got all level 7’s. Level 7 is the highest. Ja, it was like OMG! Seriously.”

Andrew was a high achiever at school, but he defined his academic success in terms of his consistent performance in the face of difficult times rather than in terms of grades. He said, “Like at school, I have never failed a grade or a term. And that has been a success for me” (Andrew, LM#165). Similarly, Denise (LM#190) said that “passing all my years at school without failing” was an identifier of success for her.

The experience of success as a contributor to resilience is frequently mentioned in the literature (Benard, 2004; Drapeau, Saint-Jacques, Lepine, Begin, & Bernard, 2007; Newland, 2014). Alvord and Grados (2005) state that experiencing success is central to the development of resilience, going on to say that every child or YP has an area of competence, no matter how small, that can be noted and developed in order to foster a sense of competence in the YP. Similarly, participants in Martin and Jackson’s (2002) study commented the importance of recognizing individual achievement. Academic success associated with resilient outcomes, as it is a protective factor against behavioural issues, and also has the potential to improve outcomes in terms of employment and access to further education (Benard, 2004). However, success in other areas, such as sport and public speaking is no less significant in terms of resilience, as these arenas provide YP with new opportunities and exposure to different people, and promote social competence (Drapeau et al., 2007; Olsson et al., 2003).

Experiencing success also generates positive emotions. Hutchinson and Pretelt (2010, p. 22) refer to an “upward spiral” of positive emotions, arguing that success generates positive emotions, which leads to increased personal resources, such as problem solving and coping, which, in turn, generates more positive emotions and so on. According to Hutchinson and Pretelt (2010, p. 22) this “upward spiral” has the potential to break negativity associated with difficult life situations and help YP cope with adversity.
The experience of success as a resilience factor, also contributes to the development of possible selves. Repeated experiences of success, even in the small, day to day, lived experiences of YP promotes a sense of mastery (Alvord & Grados, 2005), and creates an expected possible-self as competent and successful. Further, Dearden (2004) suggests that the experience of achievement is linked to future focus. Thus it may be argued that experiencing success contributes to the development of hoped-for possible selves. Having a solid platform of an expected self as competent, may serve as a basis for hoped-for possible selves that are greater than may have previously been envisaged without the experience of success to draw from.

It may be argued that experiencing success and creating an expected possible-self as competent contributes to a sense of self-efficacy. At the heart of self-efficacy is the belief that a person has the power to bring about change by their own actions (Bandura et al., 2001). Bandura et al. (2001) suggest that a strong sense of personal efficacy plays a powerful role in the development and pursuit of occupational goals; the decisions that people make about their future careers are based on their perceived sense of self-efficacy. Bandura et al. (2001) argue that the presence, or absence, of perceived self-efficacy impacts on the degree of commitment to a goal, and perseverance in the face of difficulties, that a person is prepared to invest. Thus, a person with a strong sense of self-efficacy will be more likely to believe they can achieve a stated goal and to persist when confronted with challenges, whereas individuals with a low sense of self-efficacy will be less likely to feel they can achieve a goal, and more likely to give up when faced with difficulties.

This is illustrated in the different responses from Denise and Sandi. Denise (LM#182, 186 & 190) could cite several experiences of success, and her belief in her ability to bring about change in her life was strong. She had a definite career plan, and two back up plans in case her first choice did not work out (Denise, LM#333 & 341). When faced with challenges of funding and accessing extra lessons, she sought out and made good use of resources that were available to her (Denise, PS#170 & 174). In contrast, Sandi, although stating she was good at hairdressing in school, did not feel she had much power to bring about change in her life (Sandi, LM#140). She felt that she had no agency in the decisions that were made about her life, yet she was waiting for others to generate opportunities for her (Sandi, LM#72 & 92). She offered the general idea of working hard as a means of achieving her preferred goal of becoming a nurse, but had no specific information or plan of action to achieve this (Sandi, LM#90).

Bandura et al. (2001) maintain that one’s perceived self-efficacy not only influences career choices, but all decisions that follow. Perceived self-efficacy influences the level of interest an YP has in their chosen career goal, the level of preparation they bring to the process of achieving their goal, and the
decisions they make that move them towards their goal. Thus, perceived self-efficacy contributes towards future focus. It is here that the link between self-efficacy and possible selves can be identified. Possible selves are motivators of behaviour that contribute to an YP’s future focus. It may be argued that when possible selves are identified within a context of self-efficacy they are stronger and more likely to contribute to the resilience of the YP concerned.

The experience of success is clearly of benefit to YPIC as a contributor to resilience and possible selves. A further contributor to resilience to emerge from the interviews with the YP was their exposure to role models and mentors.

4.6.1.4. Category 4.1d: CLs’ exposure to role models and mentors

An encouraging finding to emerge from the interviews was that several of the YP could identify positive role models or mentors. This was pleasing, as it provided a hopeful counterpoint to their narratives of communities and families characterised by substance abuse, violence, unemployment and a sense of hopelessness. The YP found role models in various places: family members, a boyfriend’s family, guest speakers at the CYCC and famous people.

Andrew (PS#85 & 89) found behavioural role models in the way his family members and male relatives approached relationship difficulties:

- “If one person has a problem with another, they will go to a family member and talk about the problem. And the elder of the family will call up the whole family and sort out the problem there and then” (Andrew, PS#85).

Brian (PS#172-178) identified a role model of success in an uncle:

- “My uncle. He works for [company]. And everyone there when he comes from [town] to our house, you can see this guy is very important”…”Cause he lease the cars from work and he’s got his own house. He’s got one child, but he’s not married and they always, like, good” (Brian, PS#172-178).

Similarly, Jade (PS#205) and Pauline (LM#16 & 20) identified an uncle and aunt as role models. Jade wanted to be like his uncle in the way that his uncle managed his family and his relationships because his uncle “is great, and he show her [his wife] that he loves her” (Jade, PS#205). Jade (LM#316) also described the family as “a lovely family”, going on to describe a lovely family as one that is “always together on a Sunday. To be together and make jokes and talk to each other” (Jade, LM#316).

Denise (LM#369 & 371) found a model of family life in her boyfriend’s family. She said that “he comes from a good family background. There everything is just check” (Denise, LM#369), going on to draw a comparison between her boyfriend’s family and her own when she said, “Ja and with his
family it’s strict. You need to work for what you want and in our family it’s not like that” (Denise, LM#371).

Pauline’s (LM#16 & 20) aunt was her role model of independence, because she had “achieved everything she wants to achieve. She doesn’t need anyone. She doesn’t rely on anyone”.

Nosipho (PS#72, 80, 84 & 104) spoke of Oprah Winfrey as her role model, saying, “What I learned there [from Oprah] is that my past can never determine my future or present”… “She never gave up” (Nosipho, PS#84 & 104).

Other role models were CLs who had left the CYCC, made a success of their lives and who returned to the CYCC as guest speakers. Andrew (LM#135) said that these YP “also worked hard and took the opportunities with both hands, so that really paid off for them. One of them came back last year. He was like a guest speaker”. He went on to say that “they come to visit, and maybe give something back and spend their time with us” (Andrew, LM#137).

Andrew (LM#9) had also found role models in a guest speaker who came to the CYCC and inspired Andrew’s hoped-for possible-self as an air technician:

- “There was this pilot guy that really inspired me when I was 11 or 12. So this guy came up to me and said what do you want to be? At that time I didn't want to be anything. I wanted to maybe be a policeman and stuff, but he said, you can be that, but how about you see the world? The police is around here, but how about you see the world? Then he showed me like an airplane. So he asked me, how does it fly? I said I don't know. So he said, people like me fly that. So he showed me photos of his flight school and every day he came to me and he wanted to talk to me and stuff so he inspired me like that. When I came here – and you can ask anyone – I would be like the only one outside watching the planes. They would say come inside, but I was outside watching the planes. Even there at the runway I was sitting there at the fence watching them on the runway. Maybe I would pretend that I was on the airplane” (Andrew, LM#9).

Later in Andrew’s stay at his current CYCC, he was exposed to another visitor who also served as a role model and reinforced Andrew’s hoped-for possible-self:

- “Also here at CYCC there was this group who came here with helicopters. So the guy wanted me to go and ride with them, so I was with them and we went around the airport. He asked me about the places at the airport and I told him everything. So he took me for a flight and we went around CYCC and the resort. Then he showed me what he does in the helicopter and he said that I should try. I said, ‘Okay, sure’, and then I did it. So that inspired me and that is who the person was behind the idea. When an airplane crashes I always feel like terrible and I want to be the person that fixes the things and make sure that the people inside that plane get safely to their destination” (Andrew, LM#9).
Jade’s sport coach served as a natural mentor for him, and contributed significantly to Jade’s development. Jade (PS#88) described his coach as “a nice coach”. It was evident that the coach’s involvement in Jade’s life was beneficial to him, particularly from the point of view of developing self-regulation and social competence.

As discussed in the late 1990’s by Gilligan (1999) and Masten and Coatsworth (1998), non-related adults who are positive role models make a significant contribution to the development of resilience, an observation that is also noted in more recent literature (Day, 2006; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). A role model is an individual who sets a positive example of behaviour, attitude and action, and is associated with positive outcomes for at-risk youth (Parent & Oliver, 2015; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008; Werner, 1993). Role models may be found in various spheres, including family members, friends, teachers and famous people (Brown, 2006; Yancey et al., 2011). Andrew found role models in the guest speakers who visited the CYCC where he was placed. These role models may be regarded as “turning point” people (Drapeau et al., 2007, p. 986). Drapeau et al. (2007) suggest that meeting a new person can be a turning point in the development of resilience. This clearly was the case for Andrew as the meetings with guest speakers who served as role models, created an enduring hoped-for possible-self, that shaping his educational choices and commitment and contributing towards his resilience by giving him a strong future focus (Andrew, PS#115), which in turn, were paving the way for him to study further.

However, it is possible to be a role model without necessarily being a mentor. Mentoring describes a process of deliberately drawing alongside to guide and instruct; a collaborative relational process that may powerfully influence a YP’s life over time (Gilligan, 1999; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). The original view was that mentors were exclusively professional people (Gilligan, 1999). However, Gilligan (1999) challenged and expanded this view, arguing that mentors can be found in many different arenas, and the value of other individuals as mentors should not be overlooked. Mentoring relationships can be formed in a variety of contexts, such as school or summer camps, sports teams or church groups (Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). These provide opportunities for YP’s engagement with adults in an informal setting, while participating in enjoyable activities and allow for the creation of close ties (Curtin, Schwietzwer, Tuxbury, & D’Aoust, 2016).

According to Thompson and Kelly-Vance (2001) a number of mentoring programmes have emerged since the 1980’s. Although the evaluation of the effectiveness of such programmes is critiqued as being lacking (Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001), some common features that contribute to the value of mentoring programmes are identified in the literature.
The most successful approach to mentoring is that of natural mentoring, rather than formal mentoring programmes (Sipe, 2002; Zimmerman, Bingenheimer, & Notaro, 2002). Natural mentoring relationships are those that emerge progressively through contacts and opportunities in the YP’s environment (Gilligan, 1999; Trethowan, 2008). Mentoring built on a one to one relationship, founded on trust, that is youth centred rather than driven by the interests and expectations of the mentor, and that endures over time is noted as having the strongest effect on resilience (Rhodes & Lowe, 2008; Sipe, 2002). These kind of mentoring relationships can be seen in Jade and Andrew’s experiences of their sport coaches. Zand et al. (2009) argue that the experience of YPIC is that adults are inconsistent and not to be trusted. Regular contact with a natural mentor over time has the potential to address these issues and facilitate feelings of security, attachment and belonging, all of which are critical factors in the development of resilience (Day, 2006; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008).

Mentoring has also been shown to have positive effects in several areas of resilience development. YP involved in mentoring relationships are less likely to drop out of school, have increased attachment to their school, better attendance and performance, and show improved cognitive functioning and social skills (Day, 2006; Zand et al., 2009). Mentoring is also associated with promoting positive identity development (Zand et al., 2009). Jade’s hoped-for possible-self as a future soccer coach who impacts positively in his community (Jade, PS#48) was influenced by the role model of his own soccer coach. His role model was also influential in developing Jade’s socially competent possible-self, as Jade was learning discipline and self-regulation from his soccer coach, and applying them to other contexts. These possible selves were resilience enhancing for Jade, as through his relationship with his natural mentor, he was building a positive current and future identity, which was positively influencing his current and future outcomes.

Parent and Oliver (2015) found that YP from lower socio-economic situations had fewer positive role models to draw from, which is concerning given the circumstances to which many CLs return. Gilligan (1999) argues that SWs are ideally placed to identify role models and provide opportunities for the emergence of natural mentoring relationships for YPIC. Exposure to “kind, healthy and competent” individuals (Johnson, 2002, p. 55) who are “trustworthy, positive and accepting” (Curtin et al., 2016, p. 6) has the potential to create positive possible selves that contribute toward the development of resilience.

4.6.1.5. Category 4.1e: CLs’ work experience

A few of the YP who participated in this study had some work experience. The experience included working at a local supermarket (Andrew, interview#82; FGYP1#101), helping out at social functions and sport events (Denise, PS#114; Andrew, interview#82), and doing administration work for a sport
coach (Andrew, interview#82). The YP clearly found these experiences enjoyable and affirming, in spite of the long hours and tired feet from standing all day (FGYP1# 122 & 124). Pauline described her sense of anticipation about going to work when she said, “when I was at school and I knew I come in [to work] on Friday, I couldn’t wait” (Pauline, FGYP1#116). Nosipho (FGYP1#119) enjoyed “seeing different faces every day! That was so nice”. When asked why they enjoyed the experience, Pauline replied, “we felt so mature because we were working for our money” (Pauline, FGY1#120).

Unfortunately, the few opportunities for this kind of weekend work had been limited by the behaviour of previous YPIC. Denise (PS#114) was finding it difficult to obtain weekend employment because of the behaviour of a group of girls from the CYCC:

- “Two of the girls that used to work there made their name bad there because they did not want to listen to the manager. They wanted to dress the way they wanted to dress and not according to like what they [management] said. And they have an attitude towards the customers, and they were difficult.”

Similarly, Brian (FGYP1#109) commented that the local supermarket would no longer employ boys because:

- “There are boys who are doing things that they aren’t supposed to do. They go out into the local community and fool around there. Now there are certain boys who don’t do that, but they get the punishment for what those other boys are doing. And now they can’t get those jobs.”

Providing opportunities for work experience contributes to CLs’ resilience across a number of domains. As illustrated from the quotes above, work experience promotes a sense of independence, mastery and achievement, all of which are resilience factors. The participants also clearly enjoyed the work experience, thus contributing to the concept of employment as something pleasant, rather than a daily chore. On a practical level, having some kind of work experience provides a foundation of “work capital” (Arnau-Sabatés & Gilligan, 2015, p. 189), which contributes to a CV and suggests to potential employers a sense of responsibility. Exposing YP to the work environment may also contribute to self-regulation and social competence (Arnau-Sabatés & Gilligan, 2015); there are required behaviours and tasks in the workplace, just as there are required behaviours and tasks in the CYCC or on the sports field. Learning to ‘fit in’ in a variety of different contexts contributes to social competence and self-regulation. The work environment provides YP with another social context and different opportunities to develop their social competence.

The workplace might also provide turning point opportunities. One of the participants referred to a previous CL who had worked at the local supermarket in a weekend capacity and gone on to become a manager (FGYP1#103). These kinds of opportunities are discussed by Arnau-Sabatés and Gilligan
YP might also find positive role models and natural mentors in the workplace (Arnau-Sabatés & Gilligan, 2015). Many CLs return to communities where unemployment is endemic (Tanur, 2012), and it is quite possible that they have never known a family member to be in stable, full-time employment. Finding role models in the workplace of individuals who are employed contributes to the development of expected or hoped-for possible selves as working individuals, based on employed role models and the YPs’ experience of work. On the other hand, Arnau-Sabatés and Gilligan (2015) comment on the value of weekend work in solidifying CLs’ future ambitions and motivation to study, because they realized they did not want to engage in supermarket type work for the rest of their lives. All of these factors point to the value of work experience for CLs in contributing to the development of possible selves and building their resilience.

4.6.1.6. Conclusion

Section 4.6.1 addressed the sub-theme of resilience that emerged from the interviews with the YP who took part in this study. The categories of awareness and insight into one’s own behaviour was linked to the resilience factors of reflexivity, self-regulation and social competence. Encouragingly, extramural activities and experiences of success featured in the participants’ narratives, and were of value in building resilience and possible selves. The role models and mentors who were influential in the YPs’ lives ranged from family members and sport coaches to visiting speakers at the CYCC. Each of these had been instrumental in developing resilience and possible selves in the lives of the participants. Finally, several of the YP had some sort of work experience, which they clearly enjoyed, and which provided an opportunity for them to build resilience and an environment where they might be exposed to new role models and possible selves. The chapter now moves onto a presentation of the sub-theme of SWs and CYCWs definition and understanding of resilience.

4.6.2. Sub-theme 4.2: SWs’ and CYCWs’ understanding of resilience

The sub-theme of SWs’ and CYCWs’ understanding of resilience is included in this chapter because as the interviews with the SWs and CYCWs progressed, it became apparent that although the YP were engaged in several resilience-enhancing activities, and resiliencies could be identified in their narratives, the SWs and CYCWs appeared to have a one-dimensional understanding of resilience. The interviews with SWs and CYCWs included questions about resilience, such as “How would you define a resilient YP?”, and “What do you think contributes to an YP’s resilience?” Yet, in spite of this the data that emerged was disappointing, and raises concerns that the construct of resilience may be overlooked by SWs and CYCWs as they prepare CLs to leave the CYCC.
4.6.2.1. Category 4.2a: Definitions of resilience

Lee (interview#60) provided a nice definition of resilience, describing a resilient care leaver as, “a young person who is able to withstand setbacks and disappointments that they will face, and bounce back”. Lee (interview#62) went on to describe the qualities of a resilient youth as having a positive outlook, being able to regulate their emotions, and having good self-esteem and self-confidence.

Other SWs and CYCWs relied on a generic description of resilience as an undefinable yet identifiable individual quality. Pat (FGSW#33) believed that “you can see that some of the children just have that inner motivation in them”. Alex (FGSW#224) offered a similar view saying, “they [CLs] need to be strong inside, to be able to realize that if I don’t do anything now, nothing is going to happen”, and one of the CYCWs said “you can see it in their behaviour” (Louise, FGCYC#49).

4.6.2.2. Category 4.2b: Education, future focus, steeling effects and turning points

The discussions also included resilience factors such as education, future focus, steeling effects and turning points. Education and future focus were discussed in the context of the question, “What makes YP strong?” which was a resilience-based question, Victoria, (FGCYCW#51) felt that education was a key factor; “their schooling. When they go to school. I feel that’s important”. Future focus was identified by Evelyn (FGCYCW#50). She felt that “they [CLs] must have three goals. So if the one she doesn’t see or do, then she can fall back on another one”. Francis (FGSW#36) also felt that having a future focus was important in building resilience:

- “Also they tell you, “I am going to finish school, I’m doing my homework, I’ve learnt for a test. They actually say they want to make success of their lives. It’s easy to spot them between your conversations. Most of them will say they are thinking about their future. They have motivation and goal”.

The resilience factors of steeling effects and turning points were mentioned almost incidentally, and not directly identified as contributors to resilience. One SW clearly described a ‘turning point’ moment in the life of one of the YPIC:

- “I remember one day he came to my office and said, ‘I had a dream’. He said, ‘I’m going to be a welder. I was just thinking in class one day, and then my teacher said something about welding and I thought that’s interesting and he [teacher] showed me a book and I was like, that’s what I want to do’” (Alex, FGSW#37).

Tracey (FGCYCW#22) described steeling effects very well when she said:

- “But for me, I feel like if the child, even with the situation with the parents, they must allow the children to go and visit with the parents. Not go to the foster parents, or to the weekend out parents, but to go to their homes. So they have to go to live in that environment. They’re
having a break while they are inside [at the CYCC] before they having to go there again”.

McMurray et al. (2008) note that there is a distinct lack of research that studies how SWs make use of resilience concepts and theory, citing Daniel (2006) as the only study that explores how SWs understand and make use of resilience theory in practice. The overt view of three of the four SWs who participated in this study, evidenced in the quotes above, is that resilience is an intrinsic character trait. In their study, McMurray et al. (2008) document similar findings. There was no evidence in the focus group discussions that SWs or CYCWs understood resilience as a developmental process, or as a characteristic that is developed through environmental interactions. Greene, Galambos, and Lee (2003) suggest that this is an area of social work education and practice that needs development. The understanding of resilience as a personal asset limits the utility of resilience constructs such as self-efficacy, competence and coping skills, which are attributes that are involved in resilience processes (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Further, it serves to locate the responsibility for overcoming difficulties with the YP, and does not give consideration to contextual factors that might either promote or hinder the development of resilience (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). This failure to see resilience as the “ordinary magic” referred to by Masten (2001), rather than the provenance of the fortunate few, means that there is no understanding that resilience can be learned as well as strengthened, and facilitated through engagements with ecologies, and limits the range of potential interventions (Alvord & Grados, 2005; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Hass & Graydon, 2009).

However, while the only explicit resilience theory the SWs and CYCWs appeared to draw from was the dated understanding of resilience as a personal trait, Daniel (2006) comments that SWs may draw implicitly on resilience theory. This may be seen in the (brief) mention of future focus and education, steeling effects and turning points, although these were not overtly linked to resilience, either as constructs or to theory. Similarly, although the YP spoke of their involvement in extra activities, experiences of success, role models, mentors and work experience, the SWs and CYCWs made no mention of these as resilience-enhancing factors. This apparent absence either of knowledge or implementation of the greater depth of resilience theory, might explain why possible selves are not utilized in developing resilience among YPIC.

It may be suggested that introducing SWs to possible-self theory and the practical interventions of life-maps used in conjunction with the possible-me tree activity might serve to develop their awareness of resilience as a developmental process and the social ecologies of resilience (Masten, 2001; Ungar, 2012). The resilience factor of future focus would make a logical starting point to introduce possible-self theory, and in the same way that this study has uncovered layers of resilience factors, can be used to generate insight among SWs and CYCWs as to the multifaceted nature of resilience and the connection to possible selves. This, in turn, may lead to more deliberate attempts
to link YPIC with opportunities for extra activities, positive role models and fostering natural mentor relationships. The future focus of YP can also be used to generate hoped-for possible selves and utilize feared possible selves to motivate YPs’ choices and behaviours towards better future outcomes in multiple spheres.

This section of the chapter has discussed the CLs’ insight awareness and insight into their own behaviour, their involvement in extramural activities and experiences of success, as well as their exposure to positive role models and mentors, concluding with a discussion of their work experience. These are all identified as resilience factors, and were discussed in relation to resilience literature. Links were made to the mutual relationship between resilience factors and possible selves and how these might impact on the futures of CLs as they exit the statutory system. The discussion now moves on to the theme of how the SWs and CYCWs see the futures of the CLs.

4.7. Theme 5: SWs’ and CYCWs’ views of CLs’ futures

Tables 4.3 and 4.4 present the demographic profiles of the SWs and CYCWs who participated in this study.

**Table 4.3  Demographic profile of SW participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>CYCC</th>
<th>Years’ experience in the field of residential care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>CYCC1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>CYCC2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis</td>
<td>CYCC3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>CYCC4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.4  Demographic profile of CYCW participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>CYCC</th>
<th>Years’ experience as a CYCW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>CYCC1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>CYCC1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>CYCC2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>CYCC2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>CYCC2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn</td>
<td>CYCC2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>CYCC3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia</td>
<td>CYCC3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnes</td>
<td>CYCC4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the YP who took part in this study felt that their futures were bright, their SWs and CYCWs expressed mixed views about the futures of the CLs. The SWs tried “to be very optimistic” (Alex, FGSW#5), although the optimism was balanced by a degree of pessimism (Lee, interview#2), as the SWs were aware of the challenges the CLs would face after they left the CYCC:
• “When it comes to influences they will undoubtedly encounter, when I look at them I do feel hopeful, but I also have to be cautiously pessimistic due to what has been happening in the past with children here who I would think would have followed the right pathway, but they have not gone down that road” (Lee, interview#2).

The CYCWs felt that “some of the children, their future is bright” (Louise, FGCYCW#131). The factors CYCWs identified as contributing to a bright future for some of the CLs included the grounding the YP had received at the CYCC, returning to stable home circumstances and the CLs’ personal motivation to succeed (Louise, FGCYCW#131; Rachel, FGCYCW#133). One CYCW (Agnes, CYCW interview,#2) said, “Sadly, not all of them make it”, going on to comment that home circumstances do not change and that there is no guidance for the CLs once they return home.

The SWs and CYCWs also ascribed personal attributes and motivation as contributing to CLs futures. (Rachel, FGCYCW#133) said, “You can tell. I’m in charge of the learning centre and its how they sit, and how they want to learn” (Rachel, FGCYCW#133), while Alex (FGSW#17) remarked that “If they want something, and have an ambition, then we can work with that”. The SWs and CYCWs seemed to locate the responsibility for the future success, or lack thereof, with the CLs:

• They need to be strong inside to be able to realise that if I [CL] don’t do anything now, nothing is going to happen. I [CL] have to go out and see that my parents are just receiving the disability grant or whatever. So the parental support might not be there to motivate you and say you need to get a job, or try and see what you can get. So I think number one it’s themselves. If they are not going to be motivated then I think the future is not looking bright for them” (Pat, FGSW#224).

Another SW took a rather deterministic stance, arguing that genetics played a significant role saying:

• “You cannot beat genetics. The biological factors there are overriding factors. You cannot beat those genes. Because whatever is in that little kid is in there. Sometimes no matter how much you give, you are not getting your results” (Francis, FGSW#287).

One of the other SWs supported this view saying that “You can’t take a Volkswagen beetle and make it a Ferrari. You can maybe change the outside, but inside the engine is still going to be that of a beetle” (Alex, FGSW#288).

4.7.1. Sub-theme 5.1: Reasons for SWs’ and CYCW’s views of YPs’ futures

It is possible to identify several factors that might contribute to the SWs general negativity when speaking of the futures of CLs from the focus group discussion. The SWs spoke of their frustration and exhaustion: “It’s the sad thing because you are giving of yourself every day, [giving] your everything, and yet you’re not getting the results that you want” (Francis, FGSW#276).
Another SW said:

- “Eventually I get to a point where I cannot be encouraging and supportive anymore; I’ve reached my point of no return. It’s so difficult to sit with a child and have that unconditional response when the child is pushing every boundary” (Alex FGSW#286).

These personal feelings of frustration and exhaustion also seemed to be impacted by a wider context of service provision and policy. Although family reunification is presented as a priority in policy documents (RSA, 2013, n.d), the SWs and CYCWs expressed their frustration about the absence of reunification services: “not having that reunification service that’s been run throughout the year or years that they’ve [CLs] been here [at CYCC]” (Alex, FGSW#223). One SW was particularly critical of the emphasis on family reunification, arguing that in many cases the reasons for the placement of the child in a CYCC do not change saying “then you get a Department [of Social Development] that keeps saying the children must go home, the children must go home” (Lee, interview#54). This was a source of frustration because “you are doing all this work with that child ultimately to return them back to where they come from” (Lee, interview#54). This SW went on to say “I think that sometimes the Department [of Social Development] is missing out with their mandate. They cannot just expect children to go back to their family without more intensive provision for work to be done in those environments” (Lee, interview#54). He was particularly critical of reunification services as he could cite examples of reunifications that had not been monitored, and the futures of the children and YP concerned had been negatively impacted as a result (Lee, interview#39).

The SWs’ foreshortened views of CLs’ futures could also stem from their frustration with the absence of aftercare planning and aftercare services on the part of external social workers. There was agreement among the SWs that aftercare services should be provided (Lee, interview#56; Alex, FGSW#28; Pat, FGSW#208), but when external SWs were invited to be part of the care leaving process, it seemed that their involvement was minimal (Lee, interview#30). The absence of aftercare services was also a source of frustration to the SWs who felt that “we need some sort of support system in the community, where there is somebody there just to monitor” (Alex, FGSW#26). Likewise the CYCWs felt that “if there were social workers or social auxiliary workers in the communities to help them, then they [CLs] would do better” (Cynthia, FGCYCW#158). The impact of the lack of aftercare services was highlighted by the SW who said “the fact that they [CLs] can fall back due to lack of [after-care] services, I think that is tragic” (Lee, interview#58).
The SWs also expressed frustration that there was seldom any feedback from external SWs about the progress of CLs saying:

- “We do request update on aftercare rendered to children, but we rarely get that from the external social workers”… “in terms of the service delivery and feedback we get of what is going at home, that is often not forthcoming” … “and often you find that the services are not being rendered” (Lee, interview#14).
- “I released six children at the end of last year”… “I don’t know what’s going to happen to those kids. I don’t know where they are right now or what they are doing with their lives, and that’s just sad” (Alex, FGSW#26).

It is tempting to suggest that the CYCCs could provide aftercare and monitoring services, but as one SW said “the reality is that I don’t have the resources to do it. It’s not that I’m not interested, I just don’t have it [resources]” (Alex, FGSW#26).

The importance of aftercare support to CLs and their families is discussed by Farmer (2012), Lietz, Lacasse, and Cacciatoore (2011) and Sauls and Esau (2015). According to Sauls and Esau (2015) a period of adjustment takes place after YP return home. This period of adjustment is impacted by the length of time the YP was in care; the longer the duration of the placement, the longer period of adjustment post discharge (Sauls & Esau, 2015). Parents require guidance and support to address problem behaviours and develop parenting skills, and regular contact from an external SW is considered critical to success in navigating this period (Farmer, 2012; Sauls & Esau, 2015). However, aftercare services in South Africa are not routinely provided (Sauls & Esau, 2015), and the lack of optimism about CLs’ futures may be coloured by the SWs’ and CYCWs’ experiences of CLs returning to the CYCC for assistance when their lives take an unexpected turn, such as an unplanned pregnancy (Lee, interview#9; Rachel, FG CYCC#25) which perhaps creates an overriding impression of negative outcomes.

A further factor that may limit the SWs’ views of CLs’ futures may be found in the scope of their service provision. One SW pointed out that the mandate of the CYCC limits the extent of service provision when she said “our mandate is to look after them [YPIC] from three to eighteen years. And that takes up all of our time” (Francis, FGSW#27). An additional point, related to this, is that CLs made up only a small number of the total YPIC at the four CYCCs that participated in this study. This point was raised by Francis (FGSW#180) when she said “because you’ve got other children that are still there [in CYCC] that are taking up all of your time”. This was emphasized by Alex (FGSW#28) who observed that “it’s not like those six are leaving and you are not getting any six more. As you release [CLs] you are taking more [children] in. The process just continues”. Thus it may be argued that the remit of the CYCC, and the pressures of work conspire to stifle the SWs’ views of the CLs’ futures.
The literature reflects that, in general, caregivers have low expectations of success for YPIC (Martín & Jackson, 2002; Zetlin et al., 2010). Zeira and Benbenishty (2011) observe that caregivers are not optimistic about the ability of CLs to resist peer pressure, or manage the daily tasks of living such as budgeting or shopping for food, observations that are reflected in the SWs comments in this study (FGSW#289-291). This lack of optimism may be compounded by the South African context, in which family and community dysfunction is common, CLs often return to unchanged circumstances (Dickens, 2016; Sauls & Esau, 2015; Tanur, 2012) and SWs operate in vastly under-resourced contexts (Mamelani, 2013; Mosoma & Spies, 2016; Sauls & Esau, 2015; Strydom, 2014b). Thus, it is perhaps unfair to regard the SWs’ views as “pessimistic” (Lee, interview#2) when SWs and CYCWs are confronted with the realities of home and community situations and the challenges of working with high caseloads and minimal resources.

However, the contextual factors do not negate the fact that services should still be provided that aim at maximising CLs’ life chances. It is argued in section 4.3.4 that utilizing possible selves activities may serve to assist SWs to provide targeted interventions and maximise available resources. This may in turn, lead to improved outcomes in some cases and perhaps begin to foster a sense of hope about the futures of CLs among SWs and CYCWs.

Section 4.7 has discussed the theme of identifying how SWs and CYCWs regarded CLs’ futures. The SWs and CYCWs tried to adopt a positive attitude towards the YPIC, but several factors were identified from the interviews that impact on their ability to take a positive stance. There was a view that much of the responsibility for having a bright future rested with the individual CL. Some of the SWs who took part in this study held the view that genetic factors played a major role and presented an insurmountable obstacle to CLs. The participants expressed their exhaustion when working with CLs who did not want to engage with the services the SWs were trying to provide. A feeling of frustration was also expressed around current policy that emphasizes the return to parental care, yet does not make provision for adequate reunification services to make this possible. Participants were critical of the absence of aftercare planning and service provision on the part of external social workers. This may also impact on the capacity of SWs and CYCWs to regard the futures of CLs in a positive light, particularly when their experience is of CLs returning to the CYCCs when they need help. Finally, the scope of service provision which limits the CYCCs to providing services to children and YP between the ages of three and eighteen years, and the relative numbers of CLs out of the total population of YPIC at the CYCCs that participated in this study, may also be factors that impact on how the SWs and CYCWs regard the futures of CLs.
The chapter now moves into a discussion of the theme of interventions aimed at facilitating CLs’
transition from care identified by CLs, SWs and CYCWs and how the CLs evaluated these.

4.8. **Theme 6: Interventions aimed at facilitating CLs’ transition from care**

In spite of the limitations of finance and personnel, there were a number of programmes in operation
at the CYCCs aimed at facilitating YPs’ transition from care. These included providing information
about the YPs departure early in the process, life skills, arranging for essential documentation, and
linking YP with outside training opportunities. Although post discharge support services are not
mandated, some sort of support was available for CLs after they had left the CYCC. These will be
discussed in section 4.8.1, followed by a discussion of how the YP who participated in this study
evaluated the preparation for leaving care they had received.

4.8.1. **Sub-theme 6.1: When were YP informed about leaving care?**

When asked when they were told about leaving care, most of the YP replied that they were told from
the outset that they would be leaving care when they had finished their education. Sandi (FGYP2#58)
said that the YP are told “When we started. When we did arrive at the children’s home”. Similarly,
Pauline (FGYP1#54) said “I was told on the day I came here. They told us that you will only leave
here when you have finished your studies”.

However, two of the participants stated that the timing of their exit from care was not made clear.
Denise (FGYP3#2) when asked if she knew when she would be leaving the CYCC said, “not exactly
how and when, we have never been told. But it is when we finish our matric, like our finals. So
directly after that I guess we go. I don’t know how it works”. Jean-Paul (FGYP3#6) simply said
“They didn’t discuss anything”.

According to the SWs and CYCWs, preparation for leaving care at the four CYCCs involved in this
study commenced at the beginning of the CLs’ final year in the CYCC. Alex (FGSW#145 said “[at]
the first team meeting we had [at the beginning of the year] one of the discussion points was the
school leavers”. The preparation services involved in-house programmes, but also made use of an
outside programme. It also seemed that the care-leaving processes involved the participation of the
CLs concerned. Alex (FGSW#169 said that “the child is included from the beginning, but we have
our first internal meeting to identify who are the children we need to target for that particular
intervention”. Another SW, from a different CYCC said “we do it the other way around. We start
with the individual, the children, then it goes back to the team, then after that the school leavers group
starts” (Francis, FGSW#171).
The CYCCs made use of the Individual Development Plan (IDP) that each YPIC is supposed to have, as the basis of the year plan for the CLs. Agnes (CYCW interview#26) said that “we’ve got what we call an IDP that we do with them. And every three months we review the child and see how they’re coping and how they are getting along”.

4.8.2. **Sub-theme 6.2: Practical preparation for leaving care**

The YP talked about the practical preparation for leaving care such as having an identity document and bank account (Nosipho, Brian, Pauline, FGYP1#93-99) and knowing how to complete and file documents (Denise, FGYP2#47). They also spoke about their daily household responsibilities as preparation for leaving care. Jewel (FGYP2#151 & 153) mentioned specific household chores of “cleaning the house, cleaning your room every day, making food”. It seemed that these responsibilities were shared on a rotating basis as Sandi (FGYP2#153) commented that “all the children have to clean the cottage, and then every week they change and you do something else”. Although household chores were the most frequently identified, Brian (FGYP#144) talked about different skills when he said, “for us boys it’s quite cool, because we get projects. You can clean the pool, fix lights and stuff. That’s what I like”.

Although the YP complained about the small amount of pocket money they received (Pauline, FGYP1#155), they recognized the life lessons they were learning. Pauline (FGYP1#162) said that she was learning that “you have to try and work with the little money before you can try to handle the big money”. Andrew (interview#72) was also learning to manage his money independently saying “I manage my own bank account” …“I have to pay for my own things, like toiletries”.

Most of the YP were aware that they could ask their CYCC for assistance after they had left. Pauline (FGYP1#48) said “I know I can come back to [CYCC] and they will try and help you”, and Jewel (FGYP2#135) commented, “If you have a problem with something, you can take your papers and they will try and help you”.

4.8.3. **Sub-theme 6.3: Independent living skills**

All of the CYCCs were running school leavers groups. These were independent living skills groups, aimed at equipping CLs with basic skills for daily living. One SW said, “I made them a list of daily groceries, like they need, and I said go to [supermarket] and just try to get that” (Francis, FGSW#290). Another approached this independent living skill slightly differently by asking the CLs “now when you’ve left the children’s home, what are you going to eat Monday to Sunday, what your meal will be breakfast, lunch and supper and make a list” (Pat, FGSW#291). However, the SWs spoke of their
frustration that the CLs did not engage with the group sessions; “And I said, this is going to help you, please do it. But they don’t do it” (Pat, FGSW#291).

The SWs were also active in networking with other programmes that might help the CLs. The private bursary programme, frequently mentioned by the YP themselves, was utilized by one particular CYCC, as it provided life skills training and mentorship; “The [private bursary] programme is starting from grade 10 up. I almost forced the kids to apply for that, so at least they are getting the mentorship and training” (Alex, FGSW#134). SWs had also accessed other programmes including a programme that provided learnerships and training (Alex, FGSW#130). One of the CYCWs commented that “our director is good. He is looking for work for the children. Or short courses, those sorts of things” (Tracey, FGCYCW#110). The SWs were also assisting CLs with essential documentation:

- “Giving them an ID [Identity Document], how to fill out a form, CV on their level, how to use public transport. Things like that, those basic things to get you around. How to catch a taxi, how much it costs” (Alex, FGSW#71).
- “Also about opening a bank account for them. We give them R50 to say here is your opening balance. We do give them pocket money, very little, but they can earn bonus pocket money if you do well. And put that pocket money into the bank account. It’s just to show them the whole concept of keeping a bank account open” (Pat, FGSW#72).

The care leaving preparation interventions discussed by the YP, SWs and CYCWs focussed on independent living skills. The daily routine of the CYCC provided opportunities for the YP to learn basic and essential domestic skills, and in their final year at the CYCC the SWs implemented group sessions that expanded these independent living skills components to include budgeting, managing a bank account, compiling a CV and filling out forms. The absence of these skills is noted in the literature as problematic and stressful for CLs (Höjer & Sjöblom, 2009, 2014; Rosenwald, McGhee, & Noftall, 2013), and therefore their inclusion by the CYCC’s is noteworthy. However, Nesmith and Christophersen (2014, p. 1) comment that equipping CLs with “traditional” life skills, referring to independent living skills, is insufficient, and that holistic independent living interventions should also encompass self-care and interpersonal skills. Likewise Stein (2008) and Montgomery et al. (2006) also stress the importance of interpersonal skills as essential contributors to care leaving success.

Unfortunately, this aspect of the YPs’ development in preparation for leaving care appeared to be largely unaddressed. One SW linked YPs with a development programme because it offered an opportunity for mentorship (Alex, FGSW#137), and another made mention of a school leavers camp, run by her CYCC, that had an Emotional Intelligence (EI) component (Francis, FGSW#86). The inclusion of this aspect at such a late stage in the YPs stay at the CYCC is concerning, especially as the SWs seemed to hold that responsibility for mending relationships with family members rested with the YP (Alex, SWFG#136).
The minimal attention paid to interpersonal skills so close to YPs’ discharge from the CYCC does not allow for sufficient time for knowledge and insight to be processed and integrated. Interpersonal skills cannot be ‘taught’, but rather are acquired over time in the context of healthy robust relationships, and developed through reflexivity and practice (Winkler, 2014). Possible selves could be used as a platform to develop these skills by exploring, from a much earlier stage in the YP’s placement, how YP see themselves in the future, and what their hoped-for and feared relationships look like. SW’s can use these to identify and facilitate relationships that develop interpersonal skills, and in doing so, contribute to the resilience of the CL. The value of positive relationships, and role models as facilitators of resilience is widely noted in the literature (Alvord & Grados, 2005; Gilligan, 2004; Masten, 2001; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Exploring relational hoped-for possible selves, and taking active steps to promote the development of such may well contribute to identifying sources of resilience, and developing resilience where these may not have been obvious before.

4.8.4. Sub-theme 6.4: CLs’ evaluation of interventions

The YP were asked how ready they felt to leave the CYCC. Their responses reflected a wide range of feelings, from “95% well prepared” (Jade, FGYP2#122) and feeling “ready” (Nosipho, FGYP1#327), to expressing mixed feelings saying, “On the one side I’m happy and I’m excited, and on the other I’m sad. I don’t know what to feel”, while Pauline (FGYP1#343) said, “I don’t know whether I want to go or not.” Participants also said they were “scared” (Brian, FGYP1#323 & 336), and Pauline (FGYP#339) expressed a degree of resignation, saying, “For me it’s like I have no choice. I just have to do it. I must be strong for once and face the world to experience life”.

These mixed feelings may well reflect the YPs’ developmental stage as much as their readiness to leave care. One participant eloquently encapsulated the mixture of child and adult that adolescents experience, when he said, “sometimes it feels the same and sometimes not. Sometimes I feel like I’m a little person and sometimes I feel like a big brave guy” (Brian, FGYP1#357).

The participants were invited to evaluate their experiences of preparation services and how these contributed (or did not contribute) to their readiness to leave care. Their responses fell into two distinct categories: those that felt the preparation was good, and a smaller group who felt that the preparation was not good.

The participants who felt preparation was good identified their household responsibilities as useful:

- “Well they are preparing us for the outside world, that’s what they are preparing us for. So one day when you have your own house, you know what to do; how to clean dishes, make up your bed” (Pauline, FGYP1#82).
The YP also commented on the value of the discipline they experienced at the CYCCs. Brian (FGYP1#82) said “when you break a rule you can’t go break it the next time. Once it’s broken you must learn from it”. Another participant described examples of disciplinary consequences, including washing windows and feeding the pigs, both of which he found unpleasant (Andrew, interview#150 & 154). He went on to say:

- “So through that experience you don’t want to do anything bad to end up back there again. Those are the lessons I think; don’t do anything stupid. So if you do something out there, remember that there are consequences to your actions” (Andrew, interview#154).

Dixon and Stein (2005) discuss the range of feelings experienced by CLs extending from feelings of abandonment, to feeling ready to be independent. In this respect, South African CLs are no different to their international peers, as the findings of this study and that of Dickens (2016) indicate. Although Stein (2008, p. 40) refers to preparation programmes as “domestic combat courses”, an encouraging finding from this study, reflected internationally in Sulimani-Aidan et al. (2013) and in the South African context in Dickens (2016), was that YP felt that the independent living skills aspect of preparation for leaving care was useful.

Readiness to leave care is associated with a number of factors, such as better academic success, relationships and general health (Sulimani-Aidan et al., 2013), all of which are resilience factors (Stein, 2008; Theron & Theron, 2010; Zimmerman et al., 2013). Not surprisingly, perceived readiness to leave care is associated with better outcomes (Sulimani-Aidan et al., 2013). As readiness is associated with resilience factors, it makes sense to suggest that resilience should be actively developed while YP are in care in order to maximize their life chances upon leaving the care system.

Once again, the reciprocal nature of the relationship between possible selves and resilience, and the strength of utilizing possible selves in order to develop resilience may be argued. Possible selves have been shown to impact on resilience factors such as positive school experience and academic success (Oyserman et al., 2006; Oyserman et al., 2002) and identification of relational resources (Daly, 2012). Further, encouraging YPIC to participate in extra mural or volunteer activities not only contributes to their resilience by facilitating a sense of mastery and generosity, exposing YP to prosocial peers and adults, and building social capital, it also provides opportunities for YP to develop other possible selves, either through exposure to positive role models or through their experiences of success. All of these factors combine to impact on CLs readiness to exit the care system.

The theme of discussing interventions aimed at facilitating YPs’ transition from care identified by YPs, SWs and CCWs, and the YPs’ evaluation of these has been addressed in this section of the chapter. CLs’ had long-standing knowledge of when they would be discharged from the system, and
care-leaving programmes encompassed a range of practical life skills. However, there was little focus on vital interpersonal skills as part of the CL preparation. The YP involved expressed mixed feelings about their imminent departure from their CYCCs, but most of them felt that they were well prepared for the change. The chapter now moves into a discussion of themes relating to the research objective of identifying and discussing the challenges and experiences of SWs and CYCWs as they attempt to prepare YPIC to leave the care system.

4.9. Theme 7: Challenges and successes in facilitating CLs’ transition from care

Leaving care is identified in the literature as one of the most challenging aspects of the statutory system (Rogers, 2011; Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Painter, 2007). The SWs identified a number of challenges in the area of facilitating YPs transition from care. These included difficulties securing further education or training for the CLs, the pressure of funder expectations, lack of resources for YP post discharge, and difficulties implementing programmes for groups of YP whose cognitive functioning varied widely. The CYCWs spoke more of disciplinary issues, but also referred to the CLs home circumstances and their frustration at not being able to intervene with families while the YP were in care, or follow up with the YP post discharge. However, the SWs and CYCWs were also able to identify successful CLs, and factors that they felt contributed to these YPs’ success. The discussion of findings that follows opens by presenting the challenges followed by the successes identified by SWs and CYCWs.

4.9.1. Sub-theme 7.1: Challenges in facilitating CLs’ transition from care

SWs and CYCWs have different roles with YPIC which influence the nature of their relationships: SWs have managerial and therapeutic roles, whereas CYCWs adopt a more parental role. Nevertheless, it emerged very clearly in the data that both SWs and CYCWs were deeply invested in the YP in their care, and the challenges and their concerns were sources of frustration and distress to both groups of participants. The findings for this sub-theme will be presented according to the categories of educational challenges, challenges in respect of legislation, external social workers, and lack of post-discharge support for CLs.

4.9.1.1. Category 7.1a: Educational challenges

Educational challenges were identified by both SWs and CYCWs as significant blocks to facilitating YPs’ transition from care. Behavioural issues related to education were cited as challenges by both SWs and CYCWs. The SWs and CYCWs experienced significant difficulties with school refusal and truancy Alex, (FGSW#41) said that “at the end of last year I had a mini strike at the campus. They
said, ‘We’re not going to school, and there’s nothing you can do about it’. And it’s true”. The CYCWs also expressed their frustration saying, “if that child refuses to go this morning, to go to school, you can’t do nothing” (Evelyn, FGCYCW#53), and “we think they’re at school, but they’re not. And we find out when the school phone” (Rachel, FGCYCW#56).

Lack of support and cooperation from the schools was another challenge cited by the participants: One SW remarked, “We have a school just down the road which will not take any of our children. Every time I go there it’s, ‘We are full’” (Alex, FGSW#43).

- “For the teacher it’s fine to say we don’t want your kid in our school anymore. So we have to take him out and try to find another school. And because the kid is naughty the school will say, ‘No, we’ve got no space’, so where do you send him?” (Pat, FGSW#42).
- “Some of the schools discriminate, or they expect miracles. They will phone us at 10 in the morning and say that the kid must be fetched now. For any normal working parent that would not be possible, but they know where we are, and they know there’s a driver available. So we must fetch the kid now” (Francis, FGSW#46).

There can be no doubt that the behavioural problems cited by both SWs and CYCWs are concerning, as non-attendance at school clearly impacts on educational achievement and goal attainment, although it did seem that the behavioural issues mentioned by the SWs and CYCWs pertained to a small number of younger children at the various centres, and not to the CLs participating in this study. However, the dismissal of YP from school and refusal of schools to admit YP from CYCCs, presumably based on their experience of the behavioural challenges presented by other YPIC, is concerning. The literature reflects that children and YP who present with social emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) disrupt the learning of their peers (Driscoll, 2011; Horoi & Ost, 2015), which may be regarded as a good enough reason for their exclusion from school. However, Sherman (2003) argues that the term children with special needs includes those with SEBD. Thus, in the light of South Africa’s inclusive education policy (Human Rights Watch, 2015), children and YP should not be excluded from school because of behavioural issues.

Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) suggest that attendance and motivation at school are influenced by future goals and the extent to which these are internalized and become part of the individual’s self-concept. Working with YPIC to develop rich and convincing hoped-for, feared and expected possible selves, and facilitating awareness of the connections between current behaviour and the likelihood of these possible selves as long-term outcomes, may be regarded as pivotal in beginning the processes of internalizing and making goals a part of YPs self-concept (Carey & Martin, 2007; Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010). The use of possible selves to motivate academic behaviour is an established field of study (Oyserman et al., 2006; Oyserman et al., 2002, 2004). As academic achievement is also a noted
resilience factor (Olsson et al., 2003; Stein, 2008), the link between possible selves and resilience is evident and could be utilized to address this challenge.

However, truancy, exclusion from school and difficulties having children and YP accepted into schools were not the only challenges cited by the participants. They also identified challenges related to YP who complete their education, either to grade 10 in a technical school, or to grade 12 in a mainstream school. The particular challenges they identified pertained to lack of tertiary opportunities, pressure from funders and differences in interpreting the legislation that would enable YP to remain in the statutory system to further their education.

4.9.1.2. Category 7.1b: Educational attainment and tertiary opportunities

It was encouraging that all of the YP who participated in this study were in their final year of school, and were committed to completing the year as they recognized this as the key to further study. However, their assumption of a linear transition from school to some form of tertiary education was not shared by the SWs.

One SW commented that the emphasis is for YP to attain their matric (which in South Africa is Grade 12, the end of secondary education), but a matric is insufficient to help YP to make their way in the world. “There is a lot of emphasis placed on children to perform in school and get a matric. But the problem is, a matric is not enough these days. You need to have other qualifications” (Alex, FGSW#2). This SW also felt that the emphasis on education came too late in the educational process to benefit YPIC, saying:

- “I would say that the high schools we work with put a lot of emphasis on the grade 12s and they always have extra classes, but it’s almost like too late. They need it all the way through; it’s not just the grade 12s” (Alex, FGSW#58).

The SW went on to comment about the challenges related to the intellectual level of the YPIC:

- “The reality is, the type of children I have in my centre, the majority of them are in high school which is a special [vocational] school. So they only do grade 10, then they get a specific trade, like hair dressing or panel beating or things like that” (Alex, FGSW#2).

According to the SWs this was a problem because, “the education system is quite depressing because it doesn’t cater for children with technical needs and with limited verbal skills” (Alex, FGSW#2). One of the other SWs agreed saying, “Unfortunately sometimes [for] the children at [vocational school], the college level courses are too much. So it [the challenge] is actually trying to find a programme that is suited to the level of these young children” (Lee, interview#26).
Two of the CYCCs had attempted to address this challenge by implementing their own skills development programmes for YP who were completing their education at a technical school. One CYCC had a formal skills development centre, housed in its own building on the CYCC campus that offered training in hospitality, needlework and woodwork (Alex, FGSW#5). Another centre provided work experience for their CLs, as well as practical skills that taught practical, work-related skills, such as garden services and basic handyman skills (Lee, interview#26).

However, even for YP who are completing their education to grade 12, continued education remains a challenge. Alex (FGSW#2) commented that such CLs “don’t qualify for other training options because they just get a matric (grade 12). They don’t get a matric with FET [Further Education and Training], or matric with a diploma, or matric with a degree”.8

These factors were a source of frustration and challenge to this particular SW because he felt under pressure from funders:

- “They are funders from Europe and they feel they want to see the Doctors and the Lawyers. We all do, but they don’t have the understanding of the climate we are dealing with, so they will say ‘we only do funding for that’ [university education]” (Alex, FGSW#7).

These challenges are significant and of concern as they speak to the long-term prospects of CLs, and the SW’s observation that a matric is no longer sufficient is supported by Jackson and Cameron (2012). However, it is also concerning that the comment was that the schools would provide extra classes and support earlier in YPs’ school careers, rather than inculcating the YPs’ own motivation for achieving success at school. This indicates a focus on an external locus of control in developing YPs’ educational achievements. Possible selves has been shown to increase student motivation and achievement (Oyserman et al., 2006; Oyserman et al., 2002), suggesting its utility for a shift to an internal locus of control, which, in turn contributes to resilience, as it fosters self-efficacy, ownership and achievement.

Similarly, the SWs challenges in respect of the ability of the YPIC and funding opportunities for higher education are of concern in a care leaving context. However, the SWs made no mention of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) or Sector Education Training Authorities (SETA) as potential sources of funding/opportunities for CLs who wish to further their education. The NSFAS Act (RSA, 1999) governs loans to eligible students, and seeks to address the challenges of poor but

8 In South Africa there are three types of passes at matric (grade 12) level: A Bachelors pass ensures provisional entrance to a University or degree course; a Diploma pass ensures provisional entrance to a Technikon or Diploma course; a Certificate pass ensures provisional entrance to a College or certificate course.
academically deserving students (Munroe, Quayle, Simpson, & Barnsley, 2013). It is a resource that could be accessed for CLs who might qualify for university entrance. The challenges in respect of CLs who leave school with a grade 10 certificate from a vocational school could also be addressed, as NSFAS provides Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) bursaries, in addition to bursaries for university education. TVET bursaries are open to applicants who may have only completed their secondary education to grade 9. Likewise, CLs with a grade 12 or a matric certificate without a university endorsement could apply for SETA learnerships.

It is argued in this chapter that using YPs’ possible selves to identify their career aspirations, and motivate their behaviour towards these contributes toward their resilience. If SWs are aware of YPs’ possible selves and bursary opportunities and associated requirements, that are available to facilitate these, they would be in a better position to work with YPIC towards achieving their future goals. Having a positive school experience and educational attainment are well documented as resilience factors (Benard, 2004; Höjer & Johansson, 2013; Stein, 2005). The knowledge that there might be funding available to help them make their goals a reality, might reinforce YPs’ motivation to do well at school, either at a vocational school or to grade 12. If SWs assist CLs with the application processes in their final weeks at the CYCC, this further contributes toward their resilience, as CLs will also leave with concrete knowledge of application processes and procedures. This could contribute significantly to their resilience when they return home, as the literature points out that families are often unsupportive of or lack knowledge about further study (Driscoll, 2013; Höjer & Sjöblom, 2009; Ojeda & Flores, 2006). Being able to take control of their application processes is empowering for CLs, as it contributes self-efficacy, further developing resilience (Stein, 2005).

4.9.1.3. Category 7.1c: Inconsistencies in the application of legislation

A further and concerning challenge cited by the SWs was the apparent uncertainty and inconsistency in applying legislation that might help YP stay in the statutory system to further their education. One SW asked the others at the focus group, “I don’t know if any of you have got this right, but you know the Act says we can apply for children over 18 to 21 if there are any education programmes” (Pat, FGSW#123). To which a colleague replied, “I tried, and I was told, ‘No, sorry, it’s just not our policy. We can’t do it. Only to high school not further’” (Alex, FGSW#127). Yet another SW said:

- “My understanding of it [the Act] was that it was implemented to allow further education … what sort of has happened is that it is only there for when the child finishes high school, when the child is 19-20 and they are still in high school, and they are still in the [statutory] system so we can still receive a subsidy for them” (Lee, interview#18).

It would appear from the SW’s remarks that the Children’s Court in the district where this study was conducted interprets the relevant section of the legislation narrowly, only recognizing ‘education’ as
completion of high school. The SWs identified this as a significant challenge when trying to facilitate better outcomes for CLs. One SW commented “I have kids that are in matric, and should qualify for that [extension order]. They’re not 21 and they’re in a training programme. Even my skill centre is a training programme” (Alex, FGSW#127). This SW went on to say that the legislation concerning extending the duration of the CLs placement is critical in terms of funding:

• “If I can guarantee a subsidy I can keep them on campus, then I can keep them in the skill centre, or whatever. But I can’t do that at the moment, because if I don’t have a subsidy I don’t have space. My management board is strict; we have to have an income to pay our costs” (Alex, FGSW#127).

Educational challenges are a serious consideration for YPIC and impact on their ability to transition out of care successfully. Educational attainment is noted as one of the least successful areas of statutory care, and CLs are underrepresented at tertiary level (Berridge, 2012; Rogers, 2011). In the South African context, Dickens (2016) suggests that CLs are more likely to Not be in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). While section 176 of the Children’s Amendment Act (RSA, 2007) makes provision for YP to remain in care up to the age of 21 in order to “complete [their] education or training”, the SWs identified challenges in respect of the interpretation and implementation of the legislation. It would seem from the SWs’ remarks that they interpret this section of the Children’s Amendment Act as meaning to allow YPIC continue their education, whereas the court was applying the literal meaning of ‘complete’. This may be seen as impacting on SWs’ commitment to developing the possible selves of CLs. It may be viewed as a moot point to develop future possible selves that cannot be realistically achieved in the presence of funder pressure and absence of financial support from the statutory system. This in turn impacts on resilience, as having a strong future focus and realizable goals are resilience factors. Also, completing some form of tertiary education or training improves the CLs chances of pursuing a career, or securing better paid employment, which are significant resilience factors. However, the Children’s Second Amendment Bill (RSA, 2015), may address this challenge on the part of the SWs in the future, as section 176(b) contains an expanded definition of remaining in care if it is necessary “to enable a person to complete his or her grade 12, higher education, further education, or vocational training” (RSA, 2015).

This section of the chapter has presented the findings of the challenges faced by SWs and CYCWs in respect of the educational challenges and educational attainment and tertiary opportunities of YPIC, and has discussed these in relation to the development of possible selves and associated resilience factors. These challenges were specific to YP in technical or mainstream schools, providing education either to grade 10, with a vocational focus, or grade 12. However, a theme that emerged from the data
relates to the apparent increase in the placement of children and YP with special needs. This is discussed in the section that follows.

4.9.1.4. Category 7.4d: Children with special needs

The previous two sections of this chapter have discussed the challenges faced by SWs and CYCWs in respect of YP in technical or mainstream education. However, not all YPIC are eligible for mainstream or technical schooling. The SWs commented that a further challenge they experienced was the increase in admissions of YP with special needs and the lack of specialised facilities for them. One SW observed that “Our mainstream children numbers are dropping drastically. I think we have 5 or 6 children on mainstream” (Pat, FGSW#54), while another said “With me, we have more [special needs]. We have a kombi [i.e. a 16 seater minibus or people carrier] full of children at [special school] and half a kombi more at [special school], which is the Xhosa equivalent” (Pat, FGSW#214).

When I commented that there seemed to be a 60/40% division in the YP who participated in the study, 60% in technical grade 10 and 40% in mainstream grade 12, one of the SWs responded, “You are very lucky that you didn’t come last year. We would have given you the [special school] on the same level as the [technical school]” (Pat, SWGF, line 64). When I asked for a context for ‘special school’ as opposed to a technical school, I was told “It’s mentally and cognitively challenged children. So you’re looking at low acute [IQ], between 50 and 60” (Pat, FGSW#66).

It seemed that the inclusion of special needs children and YP in the CYCC’s was having an impact on service delivery to the other YPIC: “the preparation for adulthood, that’s how we term the programme, it’s difficult, because you’re dealing with different levels” (Alex, FGSW#71). This comment was supported by Lee (interview#22) and Pat (FGSW#73) said:

- “You meet with CLs once a month and do skills with them. Then you got a [special needs] child, in [special school], but there is nothing going on there. But I don’t want to exclude him because he is also a school leaver.”

While the participants were doing their best to work with the different levels of capacity of the YP in their care, facilitating the transition from care of special needs CLs presented its own set of challenges:

- “They become school leavers before they turn 18, then the school will say they are school leavers at the end of the year before they turn 18. Then we do the [disability] grant application because they qualify” (Francis, FGSW#67).
- “For those children who have applied for the disability grant, we want to obtain the grant depending on when they will turn 18. Because then, of course, we have to take them off the
[CYCC] subsidy list, because you can’t have both” (Pat, FGSW#207).

Thus, YPIC with special needs cannot remain at the CYCC after their disability grant has been approved. When I asked what happened after the grant application had been approved, and where the special needs YP went, I was told that they return to “family; at least now they have a grant, so family, they take them back because of the grant” (Pat, FGSW#69).

A discussion of the facilities available in the area for special needs CLs post discharge identified an overnight shelter (Pat, FGSW#103; Alex, FGSW#105) and a group home for adults with intellectual disabilities (Pat, FGSW#109), but both of these facilities were limited in terms of capacity. The shelter facility appeared to be short term and required some level of financial contribution; “Some people take a few days, they pay rent. But it’s literally a small accommodation for adults” (Alex, FGSW#105). According to Pat (FGSW#105 the group home was very small, “it can only have six or seven people”, but the opinion among the SWs was that if a CL was fortunate enough to secure a place in the group home “you can be reasonably sure they will be taken care of” (Alex, FGSW#114). However waiting lists were long, “you have to do an application now if you want to get in like 10 years, because you have to wait for someone to die to get in” (Alex, FGSW#113), which presented significant barrier to providing after-care services to this group of CLs.

Although research into the field of intellectual disability (ID) in Africa, and more specifically South Africa, is scant, Kromburg, Zwane, Venter, Rosen, and Christianson (2008) and McKenzie, McConkey, and Adnams (2013) assert that ID comprises the largest grouping of disabilities in Africa and South Africa. In the South African context several, preventable, causal factors of ID are cited by Adnams (2010), including violence and injury, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum disorders, Tuberculous Meningitis and neuro-AIDS. Poverty is also cited as both a causal and exacerbating factor for ID (Adnams, 2010; Donohue, Bornman, & Granlund, 2013). Poverty goes hand in hand with poor nutrition, which impacts on foetal and early childhood development (Adnams, 2010). Poverty is also linked to low maternal education and family income and contributes to the stressors that prevent adequate caregiving of children with intellectual disabilities (Donohue et al., 2013). Caregiver stress is cited throughout the literature as an accompanying factor of ID and may be a contributing factor to placement in care (Donohue et al., 2013; Sandy, Kgole, & Mavundla, 2013).

Children with disabilities, either physical or cognitive, are a vulnerable population and have an increased risk for abuse and neglect (Donohue et al., 2013; Gilmore, Campbell, Shochet, & Roberts, 2013; Martinello, 2014; Nareadi, 2013; Svensson, Eriksson, & Janson, 2013), making their placement in statutory care more likely. Given the high prevalence of ID in Africa and the South African government’s policy of inclusive education, the increase in admissions of children and YP with
intellectual impairments to CYCCs is similarly understandable (Adnams, 2010; McKenzie et al., 2013).

However, managing children and YP with special needs is a specialized field (Thsitake, Pengpid, & Peltzer, 2013; Zetlin, 2006). It may be argued that SWs and CYCWs are not equipped to cater to this population of children and YP, as neither SW nor CYC training provides for this level of specialization (Jones et al., 2007; Smith, 2003). The literature reflects that care workers express their frustration about working with YP with special needs, saying they do not have the knowledge or training to manage YP with ID (Thsitake et al., 2013; Zetlin, 2006). Thsitake et al. (2013) argue that specialized training in this field is essential for teachers, caregivers and social workers. YP with special needs present with problems and extra responsibilities that are not always managed well by the professionals involved in the YP’s lives.

The transition from care is a complex process requiring multiple support systems for any CL, but particularly for CLs with disabilities (Malvaso, Delfabbro, Hackett, & Mills, 2016). Pallisera, Vilà, and Fullana (2014) maintain that individual pathways of YP with ID require the involvement of a wide range of professionals, services and agencies, coordination of these services and assessment of their suitability to meet YPs needs. However, McKenzie et al. (2013) observe that residential facilities in the Western Cape accommodate less than 2% of the adult population with mental impairment of that province. The SWs challenges of scarcity of aftercare placement for their intellectually impaired CLs would seem to reflect this statistic.

The paucity of aftercare services for this particularly vulnerable population of CLs is of concern. In the absence of alternative care facilities for disabled adults, SWs have no choice but to return CLs to parental care. McKenzie et al. (2013) assert that when this happens, families are frequently left to cope on their own. The risks of returning CLs in general to unchanged home circumstances are discussed in the literature, and may be regarded as all the more pressing for such vulnerable CLs, particularly in light of the literature that discusses their susceptibility to exploitation and abuse.

The transition to adulthood for YP with ID is regarded as the most complex challenge facing this population of YP (Pallisera et al., 2014). The poor outcomes associated with care leaving in general are magnified for CL’s with ID (McKenzie et al., 2013). CLs with ID face additional barriers such as negative attitudes towards disability and community understandings of disability as a curse or bringer of bad luck (Adnams, 2010; McKenzie et al., 2013; Nareadi, 2013). There is a shortage of suitable employment opportunities for CLs with ID and people with intellectual disabilities are often excluded from employment (Beyer, Meek, & Davies, 2016; McKenzie et al., 2013). Beyer et al. (2016) also comment that the pursuit of employment does not appear to feature in transition planning for YP with
ID, an observation that is supported by the findings of this study. The SWs future planning for YP with ID extended only as far as organizing the disability grant and attempting to secure placement at an adult residential facility. This is probably a reflection of lack of resources rather than indifference on the part of the SWs, but this truncated view of the futures of YP with ID denies them the opportunity to explore and develop their possible selves and associated resiliencies. Developing the possible selves and resiliencies in CLs with ID may contribute to reducing the risks they face when exiting the statutory system.

The challenges identified by SWs and CYCWs that have been discussed thus far have related to educational problems, educational attainment and tertiary opportunities, and the challenges of having children and YP with special needs placed in CYCCs. The following two sections move onto to discuss the SW’s and CYCW’s experiences of external social workers and lack of follow up services as challenges.

4.9.1.5. Category 7.1e: External SWs as a challenge

Both the SWs and CYCWs spoke of challenges with external social workers not providing family reunification services while the YP are in care. The SWs recognized that external SWs work under very difficult circumstances, and often face resistance from the families (Alex, FGSW#223), but the CYCWs were quite outspoken about the lack of action on the part of external SWs:

- “Sometimes the outside social workers are not doing their jobs. There is no child without family. I am not understanding why children from our culture [African] are in the CYCC. Because there is no child without family: aunts, uncles, grandmothers” (Victoria, FGCYCW#99).

Although the SWs were less blunt, their frustration with the lack of prevention and family reunification services was evident:

- “They shouldn’t be here in the first place. Prevention should be the best cure here; to prevent it [placement at CYCC], and that’s not going to happen”……. “They shouldn’t be kept here until they are in matric or whatever. If they are ready to leave at 13, then they should be released at 13”…..“Not having that reunification service that has been run throughout the years that they’ve been here, I think that’s one of the obstacles” (Alex, FGSW#198 & 223).

The SWs found it particularly frustrating when a child or YP had been in the CYCC for an extended period of time, ostensibly because there were no family members who could take the child in, yet family placements could be found in response to a crisis situation. Alex (FGSW#202) spoke about a current situation saying, “Now the boy has been caught with this and this and this, he’s been expelled from school, he must go home. Suddenly then the family can take him” (Alex, FGSW#202). Another
SW used the example of an YPIC becoming pregnant, “Or when a girl is pregnant, because our policy says we cannot have pregnant girls. Why all of a sudden would there be an alternative [placement], where there was no alternative for previous years” (Pat, FGSW#203).

The SWs were adamant that the lack of family reunification services while YP are in care impacts on their eventual transition from care:

- “It’s about the fact that families are not prepared enough. If you can make it clear to them from the outset that this child is coming back to you, whether you like it or not, and you’ve got to start getting ready” (Alex, FGSW#224).

Family preservation and reunification are foundational principles of the White Paper on Social Welfare (RSA, 1997), and the (draft) White Paper on Families in South Africa (RSA, 2013). Family reunification is also a core principle of the Children’s Act (RSA, 2005). The Integrated Service Delivery Model (RSA, n.d) sets out guidelines for the provision of social welfare services within the developmental paradigm, and emphasises family preservation and reunification. However, these appear to be neglected, or unsuccessful, aspects of the welfare and statutory systems in practice, and, although this is not a problem unique to South Africa (Balsells, Pastor, Mateos, Vaquero, & Urrea, 2015), there may be a number of contextual reasons for this.

Challenges to the provision of reunification services identified in the South African literature include high caseloads, high turnover of social work staff, inexperienced social workers, limited support services and the lack of sustainability of change in respect of family circumstances and lifestyle (Sauls & Esau, 2015).

Although SWs appear to recognize the value of family preservation and reunification services (Mosoma & Spies, 2016; Nhedzi, 2014), a further challenge to the provision of these services, may stem from a lack of clarity on the part of SWs on the exact nature of preservation and reunification services, and how to implement the mandates of the various policies (Brown & Neku, 2005; Strydom, 2014a). Several contributors to successful reunification are identified in the literature. Lietz et al. (2011) discuss the importance and components of social support as significant to successful reunification. Balsells et al. (2015) and Brook, McDonald, and Yan (2012) comment on the importance of parental education and training across a number of domains, including parenting skills and behaviour management. According to Strydom (2014a), SWs are, in fact, providing these kinds of services, but may not recognize and understand them as preservation and reunification services when faced with severe challenges in providing more concrete forms of support, such as food parcels and assistance with transport.
A well-functioning family is recognized as a contributor to child resilience, both as a protective factor and as an asset (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Although the literature about the families of CLs is largely negative, it is possible to suggest that if the provision of family preservation and reunification services was underpinned by resilience theory, the outcomes might be somewhat improved.

The view of one of the CYCWs – that no child in her culture is without family – reflects a traditional African perspective (Haley & Bradbury, 2014). The custom in African families has been to care for vulnerable children through the extended family network (Mturi, 2012; Van Dijk & Van Driel, 2012). However, the high number of adult deaths in recent years and changing family dynamics and structure, have resulted in the traditional system becoming overburdened and unable to absorb the increasing number of children who have lost one or both parents (Haley & Bradbury, 2014; Mturi, 2012; Van Dijk & Van Driel, 2012). A related difficulty might be found in a narrow definition of family on the part of external SWs. Wade (2008) asserts that although CLs can frequently identify a broad range of people whom they consider to be relatives, SWs are not good at identifying “key kin” (Wade, 2008, p. 43) who might be prepared to offer support to CLs.

Family support is regarded as a significant contributing factor to resilience, better adjustment and well-being in the transition of CL’s to adulthood (Sulimani-Aidan & Rami, 2011; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). As YP approach the time where they are to be discharged from the care system, they engage in a process of appraising their relationships in terms of whom they can rely on (Wade, 2008). Daly (2012) argues that exploring possible selves with YPIC, as a strategy to identify individuals who are significant adults for CLs, could assist in this regard. When the YPIC in this study were asked about their possible selves, they were also asked if they knew anyone who supported them in their possible-self. Encouragingly, several of the YP said that they could (Denise, PS#12; Brian, PS#200; Nosipho, PS#138 & 140). Thus possible selves activities could be used to identify significant people for CLs, who may be utilized as resources, and contributors to resilience, either in place of, or as a supplement to, their biological family of origin.

The SWs and CYCWs identified external social workers as a challenge for them when preparing CLs to exit the system. Although family preservation and reunification services are prioritised in South African policy and legislation, it seems that these are unsuccessful aspects of the care system. Basing family preservation services on resilience and using possible selves to identify adults, not necessarily family members, who could be resources for the CLs, might improve the outcomes of this area of practice. The discussion now moves onto the related finding of lack of follow-up services to CLs post discharge.
4.9.1.6. Category 7.1f: Lack of follow up services for CLs post discharge

The absence of follow up services to CLs post discharge was noted as a significant challenge by SWs and CYCWs in facilitating the transition from care for YP. One SW remarked that “If we had an aftercare worker, a specific social worker designated just to aftercare services; that would be fantastic. It wouldn’t solve all the problems, but it would alleviate those types of questions” (Pat, FGSW#208). Another SW commented on the importance of post discharge support saying, “And just that ongoing support, just to know that someone is checking on you. But the reality is that none of us can do it right now with the resources we’ve got” (Alex, FGSW#210).

The CYCWs also noted the absence of follow-up services as a challenge to CLs, remarking that it was difficult to prepare YP without such assistance “from outside” (Joy, FGCYCW#153). Joy (FGCYCW#156) felt that assistance should “continue where we left off. They [CLs] are cut off. And outside they only have the parents”. This group of CYCWs had some definite ideas as to how services might be provided. Cynthia (FGCYCW#160) said “I think the government should do more in this thing, in the communities. If there were social workers or social auxiliary workers in the communities to help them [YP], then they would do better”.

The CYCWs also felt that they could play a positive role in assisting CLs and their families post discharge. “I think if we can be more visible to the families, because we have that connection with the child. If we have that with the family also, we can do follow-up” (Irene, FGCYCW#165). One CYCW had a beautiful idea for aftercare services that reflected how the CYCWs perceived their role in the lives of YPIC when she spoke of “Mothers to mothers. We can help them outside” (Victoria, FGCYCW#168). When asked what kind of help she would offer she said, “how they must cope with their children. And show them what I am doing in here, so they can continue outside” (Victoria, FGCYCW#170).

The importance of aftercare services for CLs is emphasized in the literature. In the absence of post discharge services, CLs frequently feel abandoned by their caregivers and the statutory system (Rogers, 2011). Social capital is important in facilitating the transition from care, promoting better outcomes and contributing to resilience (Cashmore & Paxman, 2006; Schofield, 2005). Follow-up services assist CLs to maintain the gains they made during their time in residential care and to keep their focus on their educational goals (Trout et al., 2014). Further, maintaining contact with a caregiver may be of particular importance to CLs, as it may create a sense of continuity during, what might well be, a difficult transition from life in the CYCC to life in their home community.
Although the participants reported no formal follow-up services for CLs in their CYCCs, it was apparent that some aftercare services are provided, although these seemed to be on a case by case basis. “If a child finishes, and they want to stay on, we have had it from time to time. They stay here and live on the premises. And eventually when they feel that they can cope independently, and then they will go” (Agnes, CYCWinterview#60).

- “Not services, only support in terms of tertiary studies. Some of them get bursaries and we might contribute to the transport fees or some pocket money. And that is not only for school leavers, it’s for every child. If you left [CYCC] at four [years old] and remember us at the age of 21, if you want to come back and ask us you might qualify” (Pat, FGSW#10).

Although there were no formal policies or services that provided continued contact with CLs post discharge, it was evident that the CLs did remain in touch with their CYCWs after leaving the CYCC. Agnes (CYCWinterview#42) said “most of the times they [CLs] phone. They will give me a surprise phone call”. It seemed that CLs contact their CYCCs when they need assistance, Irene (FGCYCW#11 said that “in previous [years], they are always attaching [contacting] me from outside. Calling me and asking advice from outside”. It was apparent from the content of these observations that the CLs would make contact fairly frequently in the first few months after discharge (Agnes, CYCW interview#44). It also seemed that CLs made contact when life was particularly difficult. Agnes (CYCW interview#54) said, “sometimes, when they are sort of lonely then they will say, ‘I miss my friends’, and they will ask me what I’m doing and how I am” (Agnes, CYCW interview#54). Likewise, Irene (FGCYCW#11) said of one particular CL, “she calls me. She is still having that bond with me. I think she is struggling to cope out there without the tannie [CYCW] that she is used to staying with her” (Irene, FGCYCW#11).

The contact appeared to be made by the CLs; the CYCCs did not seem to stay in touch with the CLs:

- “I don’t think there is much [contact] from the children’s home side. We find that the kids just come back on their own. You know to see the aunties in their house, and even phoning them and sending messages” (Francis, FGSW#180).

However, one CYCC encouraged CLs to remain in touch, making use of social media, encouraging contact with CLs through a Facebook page; “we actually encourage contact from them [CLs]. I have a Facebook page where they can contact me” (Lee, interview#32).

These contacts serve a vital function for CLs. Readjusting to their family and community is challenging, as CLs do not easily form new relationships, and the communities to which they return are frequently characterised by poverty, unemployment and violence (Dickens, 2016; Höjer & Sjöblom, 2014; Tanur, 2012). Further, many CLs feel disconnected from their families and communities of origin, adding another layer of difficulty onto their transition from care (Ferguson,
Contact with a trusted and supportive adult is a “critical resource” (Zimmerman et al., 2013, p. 216) for the development of resilience in adolescents, and its significance frequently is mentioned in the literature (Alvord & Grados, 2005; Newman, 2004; Schofield, 2005). Hass and Graydon (2009) state that positive support includes an emotional component. Maintaining contact with their CYCW provides continuity with familiar people and assists CLs in making sense of their past and present (Höjer & Sjöblom, 2014). The relationships that YPIC build with their CYCWs are clearly accessed as emotional support during the transition from care, a finding that is supported by (Sulimani-Aidan, 2016b).

However, caring relationships can also be formed with other individuals in the YPs wider community, such as community members outside their biological family (Alvord & Grados, 2005; Place, Reynolds, Cousins, & O'Neill, 2002; Theron et al., 2011). As mentioned in section 4.6.1.4, the value of using a possible selves activity to identify such resources is suggested by Daly (2012). These resilience-enhancing relationships can be identified while the YP is in care, and developed over time. Such relationships may serve multiple purposes; increasing social capital, providing positive role models or mentors and thereby potentially increasing the range of possible selves for CL’s, and providing cultural and contextual bridging support for CL’s returning to their communities.

Although there is a substantial body of literature that discusses the importance of follow-up services to CLs (Nesmith & Christophersen, 2014; Rogers, 2011), and the types of support services that are offered in various parts of the world (Mendes, Baidawi, & Snow, 2014; Oterholm, 2009; Waterman, 2007), in South Africa the provision of transition and follow-up services appears to be largely ad hoc. This may be because transition and follow-up services are not mandated in legislation (Bond, 2015). In a context where SWs carry extremely high caseloads, feel overwhelmed, ill-equipped and uncertain as to the nature of the services they are supposed to provide (Brown & Neku, 2005; Mosoma & Spies, 2016; Strydom, 2014b), it is perhaps unsurprising that there is a lack of follow-up services to CLs.

The discussion of this sub-theme has focussed on the challenges and successes SWs and CYCWs have experienced in facilitating YPs’ transition from care. The challenges discussed include education and behavioural issues, educational attainment and tertiary opportunities and how these are limited in terms of funding, and lack of training programmes for CL’s leaving school with a grade 10 from a technical school. Further challenges identified were the interpretation of legislation in respect of allowing YP to remain in care, either to complete or further their education or training, the difficulties working with children and YP with special needs, difficulties experienced with external social workers and the absence of follow-up services for CLs. The discussion now moves onto the more positive theme of the experiences of success identified by the SWs and CYCWs.
4.9.2. **Sub-theme 7.2: Successes of care leaving**

It was encouraging to find that all of the SWs who participated in this research could identify CLs who had been successful in the transition out of care. The SWs and CYCWs felt that success should be judged on an individual level, but there were common factors that contributed to the concept of what makes a ‘successful CL’.

4.9.2.1. **Category 7.2a: SWs’ and CYCWs’ definition of ‘success’**

The SWs embraced a common definition of success that focussed on CLs being able to function in society. This definition included stability of employment, maintaining a decent standard of living, being self-supporting, having good support networks, not being involved in criminal activity and making a contribution to society (Lee, interview#12; Alex, FGSW#120; Francis, FGSW#21).

‘Success’ was also contextualised as being relevant to the capabilities of the individual CL. Alex (FGSW#21) said, “I think you have to look at each person’s potential and their values. I have to drop my values for their values, because my standards for success are not necessarily their standard for success”. Similarly, Lee (interview#12) said, “There have been children who have worked as waiters and shop assistants in places, and that’s great. Considering where they have come from, it’s great that they have found employment and maintained it”.

Another SW provided an example of a CL who had been discharged from the CYCC because of behavioural issues and had not completed his education, saying:

- “We hear this week that the child is working. I don’t know where he got the contact, but he is working. He is providing for himself, he didn’t complete his school and he is not 18 yet. Is that not success on its level?” (Pat, FGSW#20)

4.9.2.2. **Category 7.2b: Examples of successful CLs**

It was encouraging that the SWs and CYCWs could identify quite a number of successful CLs. One SW identified one special needs CLs who had received post-discharge support from the CYCC in the form of linking to a work programme:

- “I managed to get him work – he was a waiter – but there was no place for him to stay. So the restaurant said they will take him, and he will pay minimum rent. He managed to save a lot. He also managed to get a partner that would help him. Then the two of them went on and got a place of their own. It [work programme] does work, and for him it was a success” (Pat, FGSW#101).

Sometimes the CYCC was in a position to provide employment for CLs, which contributed to the CLs’ success. Pat (FGSW#189) cited two examples, one of whom was supposed to work as a driver,
but couldn’t due to health reasons. She said that subsequently, “They’ve [CYCC management] appointed him assistant on the grounds. And then the other was our logistics officer, and she left for, I think, the Department” (Pat, FGSW#189). Similarly, Alex (FGSW#191) cited an example of a CL who was employed by the CYCC; “She worked here in the last four years. But she left end of last year because she got a better job. She ran the skills centre [at CYCC]”.

There were also examples of CLs who had gone on to tertiary education, qualifying in diverse fields such as marketing, game ranging, hairdressing, education, office administration and music (Alex, FGSW#10, 275, 276 & 279; FG CYCW#79).

One SW identified several areas in which he felt the CYCC facilitated the success of CLs, mentioning career guidance, corporate sponsorships, providing opportunities for YP to build a CV by organising weekend work opportunities, and providing training in practical skills, such as garden services and handyman skills (Lee, interview#26, 28 & 33). Similarly, Pat (FGSW#152) said that the CYCC tries to provide equipment, such as hair clippers and beading kits, which might assist CLs to earn some money when they go home.

Interestingly, one SW observed that she had experienced more success with CLs who had left the CYCC, then returned after a few years to ask for assistance:

• “We do support children in tertiary, but we have seen more successes with children that went out and came back after a year or two, knowing what they want to do. We really have limited success with those we tried to steer in a direction. So when they go enjoy life or not enjoy life and then they come back and say, ‘This is what I want to do, I need information’, then we can support them and we have much success” (Pat, FGSW#8).

A number of factors that are linked to successful care-leaving are suggested by the participants in Martin and Jackson’s (2002) study. These include taking part in extra activities in order to build friendships and develop appropriate social skills, encouragement from significant adults, role models and mentors, regular attendance at school and encouragement from teachers. It would appear that the CYCCs were attending to these areas, perhaps inadvertently, as some of the YP I interviewed were participating in extra activities (section 4.6.1.2), and the staff did encourage regular attendance at school and were providing extra educational support at the CYCCs (researchers field notes), although they mentioned truancy as a problem (section 4.9.1.1). Further, the CLs in this study were able to identify significant adults whom they felt encouraged and supported them, and discussed role models and mentors (section 4.6.1.4). However, it did not seem that these were areas of targeted interventions with possible selves and specific resilience outcomes in mind. It is argued in the relevant subsections of section 4.7, that developing possible selves can contribute to the development of these areas of
resilience, and activities that promote resilience can also lead to the development of possible selves. In this section of the work, these arguments coalesce and clearly link to the success of CLs.

A further factor that contributes to successful care-leaving is being able to stay in the care system beyond the age of mandatory ageing-out (Dixon & Stein, 2005; Goodkind et al., 2011). It may be inferred from some of the quotes above that some of the CLs the SWs were discussing had left the care system early (Pat, FGSW#8; Alex, FGSW#20). The literature reflects that YP leave the care system for a number of reasons. Ageing out of the system is one reason, but other reasons include feeling that one has outgrown the placement, behavioural difficulties, dislike of the rules, regulations and the need to conform, and wanting to be independent (Dixon & Stein, 2005; Goodkind et al., 2011). Some of these reasons are in keeping with the developmental stage of adolescence, which is often characterised by challenging rules and a strong desire for independence (Casey, Getz, & Galvan, 2008; Spear, 2000a). However, Goodkind et al. (2011) noted that some CLs expressed regret at their hasty exit from the care system, recognizing, after some time had passed, that there were advantages to their placements, that independent life was harder than they expected and wishing they could return to the care system. Similarly, in Dickens’ (2016) study of South African CLs, the CLs interviewed reflected on the hardships of life outside the CYCC compared to the relative ease of life while in care.

In addition, Samuels and Pryce (2008) and Stein (2008) argue that CLs need time after leaving care to reflect on and process the reasons they were placed in care, their experiences while in care, and the various losses that accompany these. The ability to reflect on and recognize the advantages of being in care, however restrictive it might seem to an adolescent, and to process their life histories and emotions, points to the role of maturity. According to Pettit, Erath, Lansford, Dodge, and Bates (2011), key aspects of functioning become stable in the mid-twenties, which supports the SW’s experience of having more success with CLs who have exited the system, and then returned for assistance after a period of time.

The fact that CLs feel that they can return and ask for assistance is encouraging, as it points to several aspects of resilience: relationships with supportive adults in the staff at the CYCC, identification and utilization of resources, problem-solving and asking for assistance. Problem-solving is an aspect of resilience (Masten & Obradovic, 2006; Place et al., 2002), and a feature of problem-solving is knowing when to ask for assistance. Unfortunately, Samuels and Pryce (2008) and Stein (2008) comment on survivalist narratives and strategies among CLs, which, when taken to the extreme, can hinder CLs’ capacity to access resources. Goodkind et al. (2011) argue for interventions aimed at reframing CLs’ understanding of independence, and possible selves activities could be utilized in this regard.
Establishing and developing YPs’ understanding of independence lends itself to inclusion in a possible selves activity. Exploring YPs’ possible selves as an independent individual may well point to areas of strength and concern. An overt survivalist position may be moderated by exploring problem-solving strategies that could include identifying social capital resources that the YP feels comfortable to use. This can promote resilience in a number of ways: it contributes to the YPs agency by promoting self-efficacy in managing challenges and identifying resources that the YP can access, and also moves the YP away from a maladaptive idea of independence towards inter-dependence. Interdependence refers to the importance of relationships and support networks for CL’s as they strive to meet their needs in a variety of ways, rather than attempting to ‘go it alone’ (Dickens, 2016; Mamelani, 2013; Mendes & Moslehuddin, 2006; Tanur, 2012).

Finally, the experiences of success of previous CLs can be used as the source of possible selves for YPIC. Andrew (LM#127) and Jean-Paul (PS#79) both identified successful previous CLs as role models. Although one SW spoke of the difficulty in persuading previous CLs to return to speak to current YPIC (FGSW#180), others had used previous CLs as guest speakers and role models (FGSW#184 & 186).

The discussion of the findings in this section of the chapter has addressed the themes of the challenges and successes SWs and CYCWs have experienced in facilitating YPs’ transition from care. The interviews with SWs and CYCWs were positive, in that the participants could identify several examples of successful CLs, although one SW observed that she had more success with CLs who had exited the system and returned for assistance at a later stage. The successes discussed by the SWs and CYCWs were interpreted in the context of resilience-promoting factors identified in the literature as contributors to success. The value of including a possible selves activity to reframe CLs’ definition of independence in order to promote interdependence was discussed, and including successful CLs as role models of possible selves for YP currently in care.

4.10. Conclusion

The findings from this study have been presented in this chapter according to themes that emerged from the data analysis. Opening with an overview of the YP who participated in this study the chapter moved on to discuss the theme of YPs’ views of their futures. This theme encompassed the sub-themes of education and career goals, family relationships and helping others. The resilience factors that emerged from the interviews with the YP were presented, followed by a discussion of the SWs’ and CYCWs’ understanding of resilience. The views of the SWs and CYCWs concerning the futures of the CLs was then presented. This was followed by a discussion of the interventions aimed at facilitating CLs transition from care and how the participants of this study evaluated these. Finally,
the findings that discuss the themes challenges and successes experienced by SWs and CYCWs in their work with CLs as they prepare to exit the system were presented. Several categories emerged: educational challenges, inconsistencies in the interpretation of legislation, external SWs and lack of follow-up services. The discussion of the successes identified by SW’s and CYCWs was more encouraging, as they were able to cite a surprising number of successful CLs. The findings were linked to relevant international and South African literature, and woven through the discussions was the core argument of the mutual nature of possible selves and resilience theories. The next chapter provides a summary of the thesis and makes recommendations for further research and for social work practice.
Chapter 5. Key findings, conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Introduction

This study set out to explore the development of possible selves and resilience in YPIC, placed in a CYCC, and on the verge of ageing out of the care system. These YP stood on two thresholds: exiting the care system and transitioning into adulthood. The life stage of emerging adulthood is a critical life stage for all adolescents, but unlike their non-cared for peers, CLs experience this as a compressed transition, and are in the unfortunate position of making this journey largely unsupported and without resources. In South Africa, CLs exit the CYCC and frequently return to unchanged home circumstances and a socio-economic context of high unemployment and NEET rates among youth. Often CLs exit the system not having completed their education, or with a final pass mark that is insufficient to ensure entrance to tertiary education or training. In addition, CLs may be further disadvantaged by behavioural challenges that impact on their social functioning. In the South African context after care services for CLs are not mandatory, and are a neglected aspect of service provision to this vulnerable population of YP. Thus it may be argued that it is not surprising that the outcomes for CLs are poor, not only at this critical time of transition, but across their lifespans.

A child or YP is placed in statutory care when they are deemed to be in need of care and protection according to the relevant legislation. Nonetheless, removing a child or YP from their family is an invasive act, and should be undertaken with the view that such a removal is to better the child or YP’s life chances, not only in the short term, but with a life span perspective. Therefore, the time a YP spends in a CYCC should be aimed at maximising their prospects when they exit the system. This thesis argues that possible selves and resilience theories have considerable utility in this regard. Identifying and developing possible selves in YPIC promotes resilience, as future focus is noted as a resilience factor. Further, discussing possible selves may lead to the identification of previously unnoticed resilience factors. These may be used as a foundation from which to facilitate the development of resilience in the YP. In turn, resilience promoting activities can provide opportunities for new possible selves to emerge. However, this can only happen in an environment that not only provides opportunities for the identification and discussion of possible selves and resilience promoting activities, but, more critically, understands and acknowledges the value of these two theories and their potential to impact on the outcomes for CLs. Therefore, in seeking to explore the development of possible selves and resilience in YP transitioning out of care, this study invited the participation not only of YP, but also of their SWs and CYCWs.
Chapter five is the concluding chapter of this study. The chapter opens by identifying the aim of the study and brings together a critical discussion and assessment of the aim and objectives and how these were achieved. This is followed by a discussion of the limitations of the study. The chapter also provides a discussion of the original theoretical contribution this study makes before concluding with recommendations for further research, policy and practice.

5.2. **Assessment of aim and objectives**

According to Creswell (2014) the purpose statement of a study communicates information about the central phenomena, narrows the focus, mentions the participants and identifies the site of the research. The aim of this study was to explore the development of possible selves and resilience in young people transitioning out of care, which fulfils the criteria of a purpose statement as described above. A discussion of objectives one to four follows, supported with evidence from the findings, and section 5.2 concludes with an assessment of the research aim. Objective five – recommendations for further research, policy and practice – is addressed in section 5.5.

5.2.1. **Objective 1: YPs views of their futures and resilience factors**

The aim of objective one was to provide YPIC with a platform to describe and discuss their views of their futures (i.e., their possible selves) and to identify resilience factors. Thus objective one had two components: first to provide YPIC the opportunity to discuss their futures, and second to identify resilience factors.

The first component of this objective was achieved through the use of the life-mapping and possible-me tree activities, both of which required the YP to consider their future, and their future selves. The life-map required the YP to consider their lives at three distinct points: immediately after leaving the CYCC, at age 21 and age 25. These separate future points provided a future ‘framework’ for the participants’ consideration. The possible-me tree focused on future aspects of their ‘selves’. Thus two separate components of the futures of YPIC were explored.

All of the YP in this study viewed their futures as bright and positive. Although they were aware of some of the challenges that they might encounter, such as lack of support and resources and family opposition to their future plans, this did not significantly diminish their optimism about their futures. The content of their future selves reflected themes common to their age and developmental stage. Some of the participants had hoped for possible selves as rich and famous, either as a famous soccer player or as a stylist to music stars, but most reflected more homely aspirations, seeing their future selves with good jobs, nice houses and a stable and loving family.
Although the findings showed that all of the YP who participated in this study could describe and discuss their futures, the development of these future ideations differed. A small number of the participants had well developed possible selves, and two participants had well developed plans to achieve their hoped for possible selves. Interestingly, three of the participants whose futures were not well defined during the first of the three interviews, had evidently thought about and processed the content the interviews, and were able to show some development in their future thinking and planning by the third, and final, interview. This is encouraging, as it demonstrates that given the opportunity, YP do engage with their future selves and future planning, and this can be utilized in service provision to YPIC.

However, thinking about, engaging with and planning for future selves may be insufficient in ecologies that do not support such future selves. The CYCC environment may not support YPs’ possible selves due of lack of resources. The government subsidy paid to CYCCs is provided only for basic necessities, such as food and clothing. Finance to support extra activities must be sourced by the CYCC, and is often limited. Thus decisions have to be made about how available funds are spent; purchasing an extra soccer kit may have to be balanced against providing extra tuition for a child who is not coping at school. In addition, transportation is often a problem (Zetlin et al., 2010). These practical constraints in the YPs’ ecology serve to limit the achievement of their possible selves. The YP with well-developed possible selves and plans were attending schools that provided opportunities, in terms of extra tuition and extra activities. These YP were able to navigate and negotiate between ecologies for the resources they needed, demonstrating considerable individual resilience, but this serves to highlight the significance of the richness, or lack thereof, of ecologies (Ungar, 2012). A YPIC may have the individual characteristics of resilience, but if his or her environments are not resourced the development of possible selves and resilience is hampered.

Several participants had ideas about their future selves but were more passive in their approach, being content to wait for an adult to take charge of the processes that would enable them to access their possible selves. Still more concerning were the participants who had ideas about their possible selves, but no thoughts as to how they could begin to make these happen. Worryingly these YP seemed to be the participants with the least resources in their wider ecologies of school, family and community. These participants’ possible selves were quite idealistic, and not balanced by more realistic expected possible selves. According to van Breda (2010) and Yowell (2000) this is common in disadvantaged YP, and was mentioned by the SWs, who commented that they often felt like “dream killers”, when they pointed out the unrealistic nature of YPs’ aspirations. However, one could reframe the concept of ‘dream killer’ within a possible selves framework as working towards a more realistic expected possible-self. This may contribute to the resilience of the YPIC, as it may set the stage for success.
rather than disappointment, as idealistic possible selves may not serve as sufficient motivators of behaviour when CLs return to circumstances of poverty, crime, and a striking lack of community resources (Tanur, 2012).

It is possible to suggest that the CYCC system may play a role in this passivity in YPIC. One of the critiques offered by the CYCWs was that the CYCC environment does not prepare YPIC for the realities of their lives at home. Indeed, a few of the YP commented about this themselves, saying that at the CYCC everything was provided, but when they returned to their home environments they knew they would not be so fortunate. The CYCWs’ view was that the CYCC environment encouraged YPIC to be irresponsible, saying that YPIC would be careless with their belongings and the CYCC would replace whatever was lost or damaged. The CYCWs felt that not only was this encouraging irresponsible behaviour in the YPIC, but that it was also creating a false sense of reality. The concern was that YP would not be equipped to cope outside the CYCC if they left with the expectation that assistance would be provided at all times.

The second part of objective one, identify resilience factors, was achieved by exploring the strengths, weaknesses and resources identified by the participants either directly on their drawings, or from the content of the ensuing interviews. The resilience factors that emerged from the data included insight and awareness of their own behaviour, experiencing success and self-efficacy, exposure to role models and mentors, taking part in extramural activities, and having work experience. Although this is not an exhaustive list of resilience factors, it is nonetheless promising as it suggests that this particular group of YP had a number of resilience factors that may have supported them as they left the CYCC.

Resilience literature speaks of “turning points” (Rutter, 1999, p. 132). These are events in a person’s life that have the potential to provide a break from the past, offer new experiences and address negative cycles. Rutter (1999) uses the example of military service as a turning point for disadvantaged youth, suggesting that military service provides an opening to further education and opportunities to experience success, and therefore builds self-efficacy and self-esteem, and encourages delayed marriage and parenting. While not wishing to liken a placement in a CYCC to military service, it can be suggested that being placed in a CYCC may be regarded as a turning point for YPIC for similar reasons: attendance at school, and opportunities to experience success and improve self-efficacy and self-esteem, which may lead to delayed better educational outcomes and parenting. Likewise, leaving care may also be argued as a turning point for CLs, if they are given the opportunity to pursue their possible selves.
However, while it was possible to identify resilience factors from the data, and these represent a ‘good start’, the ecologies of YPIC may be insufficient to maximise the potential of these resilience factors. The CYCC environment does not actively seek to promote and develop resilience and future selves. When combined with the resource poor ecologies to which CLs return and lack of post-discharge support, these future selves and resilience factors may be insufficient to direct CLs’ behaviour during the turning point of leaving care and beyond.

The SWs and CYCWs were asked how they would define a resilient CL, and their definitions included aspects of resilience theory, such as bouncing back from adversity, being able withstand the challenges of life, having a good self-esteem and positive outlook. However, when discussing resilience with the SWs and CYCWs, it was apparent that they viewed resilience as an inherent character trait rather than a dynamic concept made up of processes as well as outcomes, and influenced by the YPs’ ecologies. Resilience concepts such as steeling effects (Rutter, 2012) and turning points (Rutter, 2013) were mentioned, but not overtly identified as contributors to resilience. This one-dimensional understanding of resilience as an inherent quality is concerning, as it serves to locate responsibility for showing resilience with the individual, and neglects the social and ecological factors that can either contribute to or hinder the development of resilience.

The SWs’ and CYCWs’ understanding of resilience also means that the rich potential of the CYCC to promote resilience and develop future selves, even in the context of resource constraints that prevails in South African welfare services (Strydom, 2014b), is overlooked. The CYCC environment provides an opportunity for YPIC to experience a different style of parenting and to be exposed to positive role models. It was clear that the CYCWs had a close and caring relationship with the YP in their care, but this was not linked to an understanding of the potential of good quality attachments to mediate the effects of early trauma and contribute to resilience (Ungar, 2005a). SWs spoke of themselves as role models, but not in the context of developing resilience and future selves in the YP for whom they were responsible. The importance of positive role models for building resilience and developing future selves is widely discussed in the literature (Drapeau et al., 2007; Gilligan, 1999; Yancey et al., 2011). It may be argued that this apparent lack of awareness of their potential to contribute to resilience and future selves on the part of the SWs and CYCWs further impoverishes an already impoverished ecology. The focus on the lack of available ‘outside’ resources ignores the resources that are already present in the CYCC in the shape of caring attachments and positive role models.

Possible selves and resilience theories can be brought together to enhance the resilience of CLs. Having a positive future focus has been discussed as a resilience-enhancing factor. But exploring the
content of YPs’ future focus, their possible selves, contributes to developing resilience over a number of domains. If the exploration of future selves begins early in the YP’s placement at the CYCC this allows for the identification of possible selves where they may not have been present before. The development of participants’ possible selves over the course of three interviews during this research points to the relative ease with which possible selves can be identified, thus creating a starting point for personal development and interventions. Once possible selves are identified, their motivational potential can be harnessed. For example, possible selves are known to improve the academic outcomes for YP with hoped for possible selves as professional, qualified or employed people (Oyserman et al., 2006). The hoped for possible selves of several participants in this study were motivating their behaviours and choices towards improving their marks at school as a strategy to attain their future self. Similarly, the feared possible selves of YP in this study were also motivating their efforts towards doing well at school as a way of avoiding becoming like family members. Improved academic achievement is a resilience factor, and contributes to better outcomes for CLs (Olsson et al., 2003). Success in any sphere is known to improve self-esteem, concept and efficacy, and creates a possible self as competent and capable; thus possible selves and resilience may be seen to be linked.

Exploring the possible selves of YPIC may also point to areas of existing resilience that may not be apparent to SWs or CYCWs. An exploration of possible selves may identify ecological resilience factors such as supportive relatives, mentors, or a technical college in the community. Once identified interventions can focus on developing the YP’s ability to navigate and negotiate their way to these resources. Resilience was also found in the development of self-control on the sport field, an area that was uncovered when discussing one YP’s hoped for possible self as a sport coach in his community.

Finally, exploring possible selves with YPIC may point to areas that need development. For example anger management issues were mentioned by two of the participants in this study. Exploring their hoped for possible selves and how their feared possible self as angry and out of control might impact on their achievement of their hoped for self, would be the starting point for interventions. Providing opportunities for these YP to learn and practice self-discipline and control can contribute to their resilience, and the achievement of their hoped for selves.

5.2.2. Objective 2: SWs’ and CYCWs’ views of YPs’ futures

Objective two sought to establish how SWs and CYCWs viewed the futures of the YPIC. This objective was achieved by asking this question and exploring the SWs’ and CYCWs’ responses, and also through their discussion of other issues such as the challenges they face and the successes they have had. The findings relevant to this objective indicate that the SWs and CYCWs were cautiously
optimistic about the futures of the participants of this study, but their optimism was tempered by their understanding of the reality that faced the YP once they had left the CYCC. The absence of reunification and follow up services were cited as factors that impinge on the futures of CLs. Both groups of participants expressed concern about the fact that the CLs often return to unchanged home circumstances, which also impacts on the futures of the CLs. On a more positive note, the SWs and CYCWs could cite examples of successful CLs, using a person and context specific definition of success. This informed their optimism about the futures of the CLs as they had examples of success to draw on and use as sources of encouragement.

The cautious optimism expressed by the SW and CYCW participants may be grounded in the realities that face South African youth in general. Unemployment levels among YP between the ages of 15 and 24 are high, education levels are low and this segment of the population is usually employed in low-skilled occupations, serving to trap them in the cycle of poverty (Cashmore et al., 2007; Statistics South Africa, 2015). These outcomes are noted in the literature as especially poor in CLs (Cashmore et al., 2007; Martin & Jackson, 2002). Although CLs and their non-cared for peers may share common experiences in terms of their communities of origin, CLs have additional disadvantages in that they cannot expect, or depend on, support from their families, and there are no mandated follow up services for them after they leave the CYCC (Bond, 2015; Rogers, 2011; Stein, 2008).

It can be argued that this constitutes a social injustice; in failing to provide post-discharge services the state is failing in its role as corporate parent, and neglecting its responsibilities towards this vulnerable group of individuals (Mendes, Pinkerton, et al., 2014). Further, the neglect of CLs impacts on the larger population, as CLs are known to exit the care system with multiple health and social functioning issues and frequently continue to use welfare services over the course of their lifetimes (del Valle et al., 2011). The net result is that essential services, which are already under pressure in the South African context, are further constrained by CLs making use of them.

The White Paper on Families in South Africa (RSA, 2013) identifies four levels of service provision to families: prevention, intervention, statutory and family reunification. Family reunification is regarded as a challenging and largely unsuccessful aspect of service provision (Farmer & Wijedasa, 2012). This being so, it may be argued that the provision of after-care services to CLs could be regarded as prevention services. Internationally there has been increasing recognition of the importance of providing transition and aftercare services to CLs (Mendes, Pinkerton, et al., 2014).
skills to make “informed decisions and develop coping and self-management skills”, all of which could easily fit into the scope of aftercare services for CLs, serve to improve the outcomes for CLs and their eventual families, and thus address the issue of social injustice.

5.2.3. **Objective 3: Preparation services and YPs’ evaluation of them**

The third objective of this study was to establish what interventions or services aimed at facilitating transition from care were offered, and the YPICs’ evaluation of these services. The findings show that the interventions and services provided to CLs are Independent Living Skills (ILS) programmes. Although the daily routines of the CYCC environment provided opportunities for ongoing life-skills development, during the YPs final year more intensive services were provided. These services included applying for an Identity Document, opening a bank account, budgeting and using public transport, all of which are practical matters that CLs frequently struggle with after they have left the CYCC (Höjer & Sjöblom, 2014). Equipping CLs with these essential life-skills may serve to ease their transition from the CYCC environment; if CLs can at least manage and contribute to their living environment they may be able to focus on other issues such as securing employment or applying for tertiary studies.

Although post-discharge support services are not mandated in South Africa and statutory services are provided in a resource poor environment, it was heart-warming to find that the CYCCs that participated in this study did their best within their limited means to support the CLs after they had been discharged from the CYCC. This support took various forms including limited financial support, accommodation (on a case by case basis), assistance with CVs and completing forms, and material relief. A key aspect in facilitating the transition from care is the continuation of contact with caregivers (Pinkerton, 2012). Although this was not mentioned as a formal transition service, it was evident that the CLs did maintain contact with their CYCWs, and that these contacts played an important role in CLs transition from care.

The majority of the YP who were interviewed for this study evaluated the preparation services they had received positively. Most felt well prepared to leave the CYCC, and said that the life-skills they had learned while in care would be of value to them when they returned home. Some of the YP who took part in this study also mentioned the discipline they experienced at the CYCC as valuable to them in their transition from care. They felt it equipped them with the understanding of behaviour and consequences, which they realized as a key skill in making ones way in the world. However, two participants did not evaluate the preparation services well. They did not feel that the life-skills would be helpful, stated that they had not received any concrete details about when or how they would leave, and felt unsupported in terms of their future planning.
It appears that essential components that contribute to better outcomes for CLs were not well developed. For example, there is a substantial body of literature that speaks to the importance of good quality attachments for YPIC, and the importance of maintaining these attachments post discharge (Coyle & Pinkerton, 2012; Hass, Allen, & Amoah, 2014; Zimmerman et al., 2013). It seems unfair at best that CLs are expected to leave the CYCC, which, for many in this study had been their primary home for a significant portion of their lives, without the safety net of continued contact with their CYCW. This is documented in the literature as a source of considerable distress and stress for CLs, and adds an unnecessary burden at a time when these YP are having to cope with their accelerated transition to adulthood (Höjer & Sjöblom, 2014; Rogers, 2011). The fact that the CYCWs indicated that CLs stay in touch with them, and that contact is frequent in the time immediately after the CLs exit from the CYCC, speaks of the importance of this for CLs. The SWs stated that the pressure of work made staying in contact with CLs impossible, and also felt that this fell under the remit of the external social worker’s responsibility. However, one CYCC was making use of social media to maintain connection with the CLs, and this was proving to be successful. It is possible to suggest that implementing a policy at CYCC level, to initiate and maintain contact on a regular basis during the first six months after discharge would provide CLs with a valuable service and support mechanism.

A further aspect of CL preparation that may benefit from development is the preparation for leaving care programmes. The ILS programmes implemented at the CYCCs in this study were comprehensive and addressed many of the issues that are known to be problematic for CLs, such as arranging essential documentation and compiling a CV (Höjer & Sjöblom, 2009). However, there was no apparent emphasis on self-awareness and interpersonal skills which are known to contribute to resilience in CLs (Stein, 2008). These skills are areas of difficulty for YPIC, but are essential if a CL is to navigate their way to relationships or employment. A more holistic focus that integrates these life skills into preparation programmes, would better equip CLs to engage with the people they will encounter in their transition from care (Montgomery et al., 2006; Nesmith & Christophersen, 2014).

In terms of developing resilience and possible selves it seemed that, although there was evidence of some aspects of resilience and the YP could identify their possible selves, these were present more by happenstance than as a result of targeted strategies and interventions aimed at identifying and developing them. This may be a result of the seemingly limited understanding of resilience and the role of future selves as resilience and motivational factors on the part of SWs and CYCWs. SWs and CYCWs used the YPICs hoped for possible selves as a starting point for interventions, but these interventions were aimed at linking the YP with information sources and providing assistance with application forms. While this kind of assistance is undoubtedly useful, not all the YP were receiving such support. It seemed that the YP without a clear hoped for possible self were marginalized, further
adding to their vulnerability when leaving the CYCC. If the value of possible selves as motivators of behaviour were understood by SWs and CYCWs they could be integrated into a programme and explored from an early stage in the YPs placement. This has the potential to build a strong future-self using hoped for and feared possible selves as motivators, so when the YP is in their final year at the CYCC, their plans are well formed. Likewise, a better understanding of resilience and how it is developed as a process and in the context of various ecologies would enable SWs and CYCWs to provide services with the specific aim of developing resilience in YPIC.

5.2.4. Objective 4: SWs’ and CYCWs’ care-leaving challenges and successes

The fourth objective of this study was to establish what challenges and successes SWs and CYCWs have experienced in facilitating young people’s transition from care. The SWs and CYCWs identified external social workers and the absence of reunification services while YP are in care as significant challenges that impact on CLs transition from the CYCC to the home environment. In a similar vein, both SWs and CYCWs stated that the lack of follow up services for CLs was detrimental to their ability to transition from care. The SWs experienced challenges in the interpretation and application of legislation that they believed should enable YP to remain in care while they engaged in tertiary education. Education was also mentioned by SWs and CYCWs as an area of difficulty in two respects. First, from the aspect of the YPs’ engagement with education, school refusal and truancy were discussed as challenges while YP were in care that impact on CLs’ transition from care and their ability to access a better future. The second challenge discussed with regard to education was the lack of appropriate post high school options for CLs who left school with either a grade 10 from a vocational school, or a matric (grade 12) but without sufficient marks to ensure entry to a university, diploma or certificate course.

The challenges cited by the participants were significant, and in some instances speak to structural difficulties in service provision. South Africa is a country that faces a multitude of social problems, and children and YP are particularly vulnerable to their effects. Crime rates are high and YP are disproportionately affected by crime (Statistics South Africa, 2016b). Access to education and health services continues to be uneven (Hall, 2016a, 2016b), and HIV rates remain significant (Statistics South Africa, 2016a). Economic growth is slow and income growth is uneven (Pravin Gordhan Minister of Finance, 2017), with the most stable classes being the elite and chronically poor (Zizzamia, Schotte, & Liebbrandt, 2016). Poverty in South Africa remains a serious challenge; sadly chronic poverty remains constant, and 3.7 million South Africans who were not poor in 2008 had become poor by 2014 (Zizzamia et al., 2016). Grants are in place to provide social assistance and increases in the Child Support and Foster Care grants will come into effect from 1 April 2017. However, the subsidies to CYCCs have not been increased for at least the past two years, and remain
at R1,700 per child per month (Mrs C Williams, 6 March 2017), suggesting that YP in CYCCs are marginalized in government thinking and planning.

On a more positive note, the SWs and CYCWs were also able to identify successes they have experienced in respect of CLs. It was encouraging that the SWs and CYCWs regarded success from an individualized and strengths based perspective. They felt that ‘success’ should be evaluated in terms of the individual CL, and his or her particular abilities. There was also the view that ‘success’ may not be evident immediately post-discharge, and that the concept of ‘readiness’ played a part in CLs’ success. One CYCC had an ‘open door’ policy; any YP who had been placed at the CYCC was free to return and request assistance at any time after they had left. The SW from this CYCC stated that she had experienced better success with YP who had returned and requested assistance. She felt that CLs sometimes needed a period to escape the structure of the CYCC, and perhaps be a little wild, which is in keeping with CLs’ developmental stage. She felt, and was supported by her colleagues, that CLs respond more positively when they have decided to seek assistance and support. This, in itself, was regarded as ‘success’, and her evaluation was that the consequent interventions or assistance was better utilized by the CL, and led to more successful outcomes.

The SWs and CYCWs discussed CLs who had gone on to complete some form or tertiary education, which was regarded as a form of success, even if the CL concerned was not employed in their chosen field. Encouragingly, success was not defined only in terms of completing tertiary education; in fact one SW was quite exasperated with funders who only considered successful CLs as those with degrees. This expectation disregarded the realities of the academic potential of many of the YPIC, and thus the context of service provision to YPIC. The SWs discussed CLs who had left the CYCC with little ‘success’ in terms of education, but who had managed to secure and maintain employment, and were living independently, which was the overriding definition of success suggested by the SWs and CYCWs. One SW went further and located this definition in the context of CLs who had never experienced family members having employment or not having to access social grants as their primary source of income. When regarded through this lens, a CL who is able to secure employment as a cashier, or waiter and secure and maintain their own place to live is truly successful.

Absent from the SWs’ and CYCWs’ discussion of success was the role of resilience and future selves in facilitating these successes. The SWs were able to discuss how they may have linked CLs with resources but did not identify this as resilience enhancing. Likewise, when discussing CLs who had navigated and negotiated their way to resources, as in the example of a CL who had found employment as a waiter, there was no mention of the considerable resilience shown by this particular CL who had been linked with employment but struggled to find accommodation. His employer
stepped in to assist him; later the CL teamed up with a workmate to share the costs of rented accommodation, and thus became self-sufficient.

Another aspect of ‘success’ that was missing from the accounts of the SWs and CYCWs was CLs who had created and maintained a successful family life. The problem of pregnancy among female CLs was discussed by both groups of participants, and they expressed their frustration and disappointment that the offspring of CLs were frequently placed in the CYCC. However, family life was not mentioned as an aspect of success, and it seemed that the only perspective was one of negative expectations in this regard. This may be because the most common experience cited by SWs and CYCWs is the return of female CLs requesting material assistance when they are pregnant and after the baby has been born, and later when the child is removed and placed at the CYCC. This is concerning, because there is evidence of CLs who have created and maintained intact families (Bond, 2010). Findings from Bond’s (2010) study indicated that the motivation for participants to maintain their families was seen in their determination that their children would not grow up in a CYCC. This could be linked to a feared possible self, and suggests the value of feared selves as motivators for behaviour that leads to positive outcomes. Most of the YP in this study spoke of their hoped for selves as married with a family; one YP spoke of not wanting her children to be placed in a CYCC. If family life as an aspect of success is overlooked by SWs and CYCWs, opportunities to utilize the hoped for and feared selves of YPIC to build their resilience and capacity to build their own families are lost.

The fifth objective of this study was to make recommendations for further research, policy and practice. This objective is addressed in section 5.5 below.

5.2.5. Integration of the aim and objectives

The aim of this study was to explore the development of possible selves and resilience in YP transitioning out of care. The study showed that these varied across the participants. A few of the participants had well-developed possible selves, but most of the YP in this study did not; their possible selves were present but not foregrounded, until the data collection activities prompted the YP to attend to them. However, the possible selves that were vague at the outset of the study, showed considerable development over the course of the three interviews that were conducted in this research. This suggests that possible selves may be readily developed in the context of targeted interventions.

It was possible to identify multiple areas that contribute to resilience from the interviews with the YP. They spoke of times of success and self-efficacy and were involved with extramural activities which were contributing to their resilience in a number of ways. Several participants were learning discipline and self-control from their sporting activities, others were learning new skills, overcoming personal
challenges and discovering that they were capable of doing something new, all of which are significant contributors to resilience. However, it may be argued that these resilience-enhancing factors were present more by coincidence than as a result of deliberate efforts to improve the resilience of YPIC, as the SWs and CYCWs showed a limited understanding of resilience.

In evaluating the resilience and possible selves of the YP who were preparing to leave the CYCCs it would seem that although resilience factors and possible selves were present, their utility to the YP who were about to leave the CYCC was not recognized. It would also appear that their value in terms of interventions for YPIC, from an earlier stage than the final year of a YP’s placement was also unrecognized. It was apparent that the YP in this study were made aware at the beginning of their placement when they would be leaving the CYCC. This represents an improvement in service provision, as the literature reflects that CLs were frequently only informed of their discharge date as little as one month before the time (Bond, 2010; Freundlich et al., 2007; Kaplan et al., 2009). However, the actual preparation for leaving care experienced by the YP in this study focussed on ILS, and was only formally implemented at the beginning of their final year in the CYCC. This coincides with their final year at school which is a very pressured and stressful time for all YP, and very late for a group of YP who will attempt the transition to adulthood with few resources and little support.

The potential of resilience theory and possible selves to impact on the outcomes for CLs could be maximized, if activities designed to identify possible selves, were implemented in grade seven, the year before South African learners move into high school. Sulimani-Aidan (2016a) comments that while the literature frequently examines YPs’ views of their futures, the content of their futures remains largely unexplored. This seemed to be the case for the YP in this study. It may be suggested that when SWs and CYCWs are unaware of the content of YPs future selves, and their hoped and feared possible selves they miss valuable opportunities to identify and develop resilience factors, and use the content of future selves as motivators of behaviour.

5.3. Limitations of the study

There are a number of limitations to this study. First this was a small scale study using small samples carried out in one location in South Africa. A total of twelve YP, four SWs and nine CYCWs participated in the research. As this was a qualitative study, the use of small, purposively selected samples was appropriate. However this does mean that the findings are specific to this particular study only. Although generalization is not the aim of qualitative research, the scale of the study impacts on the transferability of the research. Replicating this study at other sites, with other purposefully selected samples may address this limitation.
A further limitation lies within when this research was conducted and the YPs’ evaluation of the care leaving preparation. Although the YP said they felt well prepared to leave the CYCC, their evaluation was not based on any lived experience of using the preparation services outside the CYCC environment. A follow up study might yield different data in a year’s time, for example, when the CLs have some experience of coping outside the CYCC.

Although the ethical consideration of confidentiality was included in all the informed consent forms, and stressed at the beginning of every interview or focus group, it cannot be assumed that this was sufficient to ensure complete honesty among the participants of this study, and thus represents a limitation. Although the YP from the individual CYCCs were known to one another, it may not be supposed that their relationships were such that they would feel comfortable about being open in the focus groups. The converse may be true of the CYCWs, who were from different CYCCs and did not appear to know one another. This may have impacted on their willingness to be completely open in front of strangers from other institutions.

A limitation may also be found in the differing cognitive levels of the participants. Several of the participants attended a vocational school (for learners with mild to moderate learning difficulties), and found the writing component of the possible-me tree activity taxing. This could be addressed in future research by collapsing stages one (writing on the strengths and weaknesses grid) and two (transferring this information onto the possible-me tree) into one stage. An additional limitation, with five of the participants, was that of language. Although they were attending English medium schools, their home language was Afrikaans. This may have impacted on their ability to engage with the activities fully, as the instructions were given in English, and they were writing their thoughts in English. Similarly, their responses to the interview questions may have yielded richer data if the questions had been posed answered in their home language. This limitation could be addressed in future by making use of an Afrikaans speaking social work researcher to conduct the interviews.

5.4. Original contribution of this study

Care-leaving research is an emerging field in South Africa, and to date, this study is one of only a small number to examine this topic (viz. Bond, 2010; Dickens, 2016; Mamelani, 2013; Meyer, 2008; van Breda et al., 2012). It therefore follows that there is scope for expansion in this area of research in the South African context. This research makes a contribution to this emerging body of knowledge, but also provides a unique emphasis in that it focuses on a group of YP who were on the point of disengagement with the statutory system, as opposed to studies that explore the experiences of YP after disengagement. The voice of YPIC is notably absent in the literature. This may be because consent is often difficult to secure, and gate keepers may block the participation of YP (Alderson &
Morrow, 2011; Kendrick et al., 2008). Thus, it may be more expedient to carry out research with CLs who have aged out of the system and are able to give their consent independently. However, collecting data from CLs after they have left the CYCC allows them time to reflect on their CYCC experiences in the light of the reality of life outside the CYCC (Bond, 2010). This research makes a unique contribution as it captures the voices of YP while they are still in the CYCC, and their hopes for their futures are still fresh.

Further, most studies in other countries have focussed on the outcomes after leaving care, such as employment (Henig, 2009), access to health care and housing (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006), support systems and transitional services (Manteuffel et al., 2008; Naccarato, Brophy, & Courtne, 2010; Spencer, Colins, Ward, & Smashnya, 2010). Research that examines the preparedness of youth to exit the care system and live independently comments on life skills and training programs, such as budgeting (Freundlich et al., 2007) and “domestic combat courses” (Stein, 2008, p. 40). Freundlich et al. (2007) note the paucity of services offered to YPIC that address career planning or relationship building. This study provided a unique focus in that it moved the discussion away from practical services, to services aimed at developing the future focus and resilience of the person.

Currently there is a longitudinal study underway by the University of Johannesburg and Girls and Boys Town South Africa (van Breda & Dickens, 2016) that examines the experiences of youth as they exit the statutory system, and tracks their progress into independent living. However, there is an absence of research that allows the young people currently in care a platform to evaluate the services they have received and express their views of their futures. This absence is noted in the literature (Emond, 2003; Franks, 2011; Southwell & Fraser, 2010).

It is also my observation that although there is much discussion about the role of social service/care providers, they too have a marginalised voice in the discourse that surrounds statutory care. This is particularly relevant to the CYCWs, as Coughlan and Collins (2001) note that they often feel overlooked and powerless in the daily decision making processes in CYCCs. Thus, this study gave voice to two groups who may not have been adequately heard previously.

Possible self and social ecological resilience theories are marginalized in care leaving research. Locating this study within these theories is therefore a unique approach. The study also represents a development on previous research which has historically taken a deficit approach to statutory care. This is the first South African study to use these theories to understand the preparation of young people for leaving care. This study also makes an original theoretical contribution in bringing together resilience and possible selves theories, and exploring how the content of the YPs’ future focus may be linked to their resilience. Resilience is defined as showing positive adaptation in spite of significant
adversity (Luthar, 2006). Factors that contribute to resilience include individual characteristics, such as an easy going disposition or good problem solving skills. Resilience may also be facilitated by outside factors, such as taking part in extra activities, exposure to positive role models or mentors or experiencing success (Gilligan, 2007).

Future focus is noted in the literature as a resilience-enhancing factor (Sulimani-Aidan, 2016a). A positive future focus has been linked to better social adjustment (Dubrow, Arnett, Smith, & Ippolito, 2001), better educational outcomes (Beal & Crockett, 2010), is discussed as a motivational factor (Adelabu, 2008), is associated with fewer risk taking behaviours (Sipsma, Ickovics, Lin, & Kershaw, 2012), and is linked with long term goal setting (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004). Among CLs, higher future expectations have been shown to be associated with better outcomes (Sulimani-Aidan, 2015). However, there are very few studies that examine the future expectations of CLs (Van Audenhove & Laenen, 2015), and the focus of these studies has been the degree of optimism expressed by CLs about their futures; the content of CLs’ future expectations has been largely unaddressed (Sulimani-Aidan, 2016a).

This study makes an original theoretical contribution as it explores, not only the optimism expressed by CLs about their futures, but the content of their future expectations and how this content may contribute to CLs’ resilience. Exploring the content of future expectations reveals areas that may be utilized to enhance resilience. For example, the hoped for possible-self as a famous soccer player, when balanced with the more realistic expected-self as playing for a university or community team, provides an opportunity to link the YPIC with a soccer team. This has the potential to develop resilience factors such as experiencing success, improving self-esteem, expanding social capital and exposure to positive role-models or mentors. The social skills and self-discipline learned on the sport field are resilience-enhancing factors, which have a wider application, for example at school, or in the world of work. Exploring the content of future selves can identify a YP’s hoped for and feared selves, which can be utilized as motivational forces, or may reveal areas of existing resilience. The content of future selves can also be used as the starting point for interventions either to address a feared possible self or to enhance and develop a hoped for possible self. Simply exploring the YP’s view of their future would have missed this rich content that has the potential to be utilized to enhance resilience in YPIC, and contribute to better outcomes for CLs.

5.5. **Objective 5: Recommendations**

The chapter concludes with a discussion of objective five; recommendations for further research, policy and practice.
5.5.1. **Recommendations for further research**

It is recommended that this study be replicated in other CYCCs to build onto the small foundation of knowledge created by this initial investigation. The field of care-leaving research is an emerging entity in South Africa, and there is an overall need for more South African research into all aspects of care leaving. Replicating this study at other sites in South Africa will add to the developing body of local knowledge.

Another avenue for further research would be to conduct a follow-up study with the CLs who participated in this study. This would contribute to the evolving field of care-leaving research in South Africa, as such research might provide data on how the CLs transitioned out of care, the resiliencies and resources they utilized as they made the transition, whether they realized their possible selves, and if they did, how, and provide data about the outcomes for CLs in South Africa.

A final recommendation for further research is to conduct studies with SWs and CYCWs that explore their knowledge, understanding and application of resilience theory. Given that SWs and CYCWs work mostly with disadvantaged people, families and communities, and that services in South Africa are provided in a resource poor context, the use of resilience theory would appear to be critical to mediating some of the challenges faced by the recipients of social work services. The one dimensional understanding of resilience on the part of the SWs and CYCWs who participated in this study, suggests that further research is necessary to establish why this essential theory is not better understood and utilized in practice.

5.5.2. **Recommendations for policy**

The absence of policy and mandated services for CLs has been discussed in chapters two and four of this thesis. Thus, recommendations for policy are essential. The lack of mandated planning, support and after-care services to CLs is deeply concerning, given the poor outcomes associated with care-leaving. Where such services have been implemented internationally, improvements in the outcomes for CLs are noted.

The results of this study indicate that when aftercare services are provided they are provided out of the good will of the CYCC, and are subject to the means and available resources of the individual CYCC at any given time. This results in a lack of consistency in service provision, even within the scope of each individual CYCC. Subsidy cuts, loss of donors and changes in the economy are examples of the fragility of the resources of CYCCs. Thus, the assistance each CYCC is able to offer may well vary from year to year. In addition, resources may differ between CYCCs further fragmenting the service provision to CLs. Compounding this situation, is the lack of clarity that
surrounds the responsibility for aftercare services to CLs, as there is no clear allocation of who should be responsible for follow up services. Therefore, there is an urgent need for changes to the legislation and policy that not only make aftercare services mandatory, but that spell out the responsibilities of the role players in providing such services.

A further recommendation for policy related to the responsibility for providing aftercare services, is the implementation of designated social workers for CLs. The current situation in South Africa is that the external social worker is understood, or expected, to provide follow up services. However, as the findings of this study indicate, when this happens it is usually minimal, and not consistent across agencies. Social workers in South Africa carry large caseloads, and find it difficult to attend to the ‘extra’ work of supporting CLs. In an effort to address the situation of social work as a scarce skill, the Department of Social Development implemented a bursary scheme to train future social workers. However, the current situation is that there are now more newly qualified social workers than there are available posts. From the beginning of 2017 the bursary has been withdrawn, and the funds redirected in order to create posts to address the backlog of newly qualified social workers. The creation of social work posts designated to supporting CLs’ transitions from care is therefore recommended.

Similarly, the provision of family reunification services is known to be a problematic and unsuccessful aspect of service provision to families who engage with the statutory system. Social workers are uncertain about the nature and scope of family reunification and who is responsible for these services. A comprehensive policy that makes roles and responsibilities clear is recommended. The creation of designated family reunification social work posts is also recommended.

Finally, none of the CYCCs that participated in this study had their own organizational policy in respect of care leaving. This is a significant oversight and has practice implications; in the absence of a clear policy matters such as preparation programmes, informing CLs about the process of discharge, and the exact date of their exit from the CYCC are implemented or addressed seemingly at random. It is therefore recommended that individual CYCCs should have organizational policies specifically for care leaving.

5.5.3. Recommendations for training and practice

There are a number of recommendations for training and practice that can be made as a result of this study. First, resilience theory should be actively promoted in SW and CYCW training, as it is an appropriate and applicable theory across every sphere of practice for helping professionals. At present, training curriculums for social work and child and youth care work may address resilience
as a component of a module, but not as a stand-alone theory. Resilience theory could be taught as part of the SW and CYCW curriculums, but also as part of the Continual Professional Development requirement. South African practitioners work in resource constrained environments; an awareness of resilience as a dynamic concept that can be actively fostered in individuals, families and communities may make a considerable difference in service provision. This is particularly relevant in the field of CYCCs and care leaving as, in the absence of aftercare services, CLs require considerable resilience in order to make their way into adulthood.

Second, although many of the YP who took part in this study were participating in extramural activities, there was no apparent understanding of the value of these as contributors to resilience and the development of possible selves. Thus it may happen that extramural activities may be overlooked, or considered as non-essential when funds and resources are low. Given the potential of extramural activities to contribute towards resilience in terms of self-confidence and esteem, self-discipline and efficacy, exposure to role models and expansion of social capital, YPIC should be actively encouraged to participate in sporting or cultural events.

The third recommendation is that possible selves interventions are developed and implemented in CYCCs. The development of the YPs possible selves over the course of three interviews suggests the utility of the activities employed in this study as intervention strategies. The findings clearly show that given the opportunity, YP think about and construct future selves. Ideally, these activities should be implemented from grade seven and developed incrementally, so that when the YP are in their final year at the CYCC, they have well developed possible selves, accompanied by a strong plan of action, and links to available resources. This may serve to mediate some of the negative outcomes associated with being in care, and improve the life chances, not only of the CLs, but of their eventual families.

A fourth recommendation is that CLs should be provided with concrete information about the discharge process on an ongoing basis throughout their last year in the CYCC. Uncertainty about discharge processes and dates is known to be deeply unsettling for YPIC. The final year at school is a stressful time, and every effort should be made to reduce additional stressors in order that the YP can focus on the important task of obtaining their best final mark.

The fifth recommendation is related to the fourth; CLs should be provided with a care-leaving information ‘pack’ containing the contact details of their external social worker and who they may contact at the CYCC. They should also be provided with information about training, bursary and funding opportunities; the requirements and application processes, and the location and contact details of local or district offices.
Finally, family reunification services should receive more attention throughout YPs’ placement. When YP return to unchanged home circumstances, or to families that are ill prepared for the YP’s return this may contribute to the poor outcomes associated with care leaving. As mentioned in section 5.5.2 clarity is needed at policy level as to where the responsibility for rendering family reunification services lies. But at a practice and training level, family reunification should be included in social work training, and more focus should be placed on reunification services in practice.

5.6. Conclusion

Care leavers are arguably the most overlooked group of YP in the statutory system. The study of care systems has historically focused on youth in foster care. It is only comparatively recently that youth in CYCCs have become an area of interest for researchers, and the interest was prompted by the poor outcomes associated with this population of YP. Care leavers stand on the brink of adulthood; a time of excitement and optimism. Unfortunately, although many CLs share the same feeling of optimism as their non-cared for peers, their experience of this life stage is very different. Care leavers often exit the CYCC with poor educational attainment and behavioural challenges, and frequently return to unchanged home and community situations without any support from the care system. Thus the development of their resilience while placed in a CYCC is of paramount importance if this vulnerable group of YP are to have a reasonable chance of successfully transitioning to adulthood.

This central tenet of this study is that the complementarity of possible selves and resilience theories can be utilized to develop the resilience of YPIC, and thus play a role in improving the outcomes for CLs. The findings from this study show that the participants had thought about their future selves to a greater or lesser extent. Those that had not given much thought to their possible selves engaged with the data collection activities, and their possible selves developed significantly over the course of the three research interviews. This suggests the value of implementing possible selves activities for YPIC. By using data collection techniques that encouraged the identification and elaboration of YPs’ futures selves, it was possible to identify how their possible selves might be used to enhance their resilience. The data collection techniques also revealed resilience-enhancing factors that could be utilized in the development of possible selves.

Finally, each one of the YP who took part in this study had hopes for a bright future. It is the responsibility of the role players in the statutory system to work towards making these hoped for bright futures a reality for the YP entrusted to their care. Improving the prospects for YP in general in South Africa is a complex and difficult challenge. The challenges that face all YP are exacerbated for CLs, who enter the stage of emerging adulthood with additional difficulties. Making use of possible selves to identify areas of resilience, and using resilience to promote possible selves is a
practical approach that can be utilized from an early stage in a YPs placement, and which has the potential to contribute towards better outcomes for CLs as they embark on their life journey.


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Gaskell, C. (2010). 'If the social worker had called at least it would show they cared': Young care leavers' perspectives on the importance of care. *Children & Society, 24*, 136-147.


Maclean, K. (2004). Resilience: What it is and how children and young people can be helped to develop it. CYC-Online, 62(March).


Nhedzi, F. (2014). The experiences and perceptions of social workers on the provision of family preservation services in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan, Gauteng Province. (Master of Arts in Social Science in Social Work), University of South Africa, South Africa.


10.1002/pits


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Annexures
Annexure 1. Letter to research sites

Attn: Prof/Dr/Mr(s)/Ms (name of organization director)
Name and address of organization
Per email/fax/post

11/10/14

Dear
REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT (ORGANIZATION) CHILD AND YOUTH CARE CENTRE

This letter serves to request permission to conduct research at (organization) Child and Youth Care Centre. I am a registered social worker, resident in East London, currently engaged in a PhD study at the University of Johannesburg. The study has been approved by the University of Johannesburg ethics committee (letter attached), and will at all times adhere to the ethical standards and responsibilities when undertaking research with vulnerable populations of young people.

The title of the study is “the development of possible selves and resilience in young people leaving care”. The purpose of the research is to identify qualities and aspects of resilience in young people leaving care, and to what extent these, their possible selves, are identified and developed. The study also proposes to engage young people leaving care in a discussion with regard to their feelings of preparedness for leaving care. In parallel with this, the experiences and views of their caregivers (social workers and child and youth care workers) will also be solicited.

Care leaving is a neglected aspect of study, and little literature exists that examines the experiences of young people leaving care in South Africa. In comparison to the international arena, South African policy is negligible. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the small, but growing, body of literature about care leaving in the South African context, that may be influential in shaping evidence based interventions and policy. It is also anticipated that making care leavers the focus of the study
will bring their voices to the forefront of any ensuing discussion, which is a crucial foundation for the development of genuine young people centred programs.

The data will be collected from three groups of participants at four child and youth care centres in the Port Elizabeth area. First, data collection from young people comprises two individual interviews and a focus group with three young people at (organization), who have been at the CYCC for a minimum of two consecutive years, and who are on the verge of aging out of the statutory system. The data will be collected by means of a life mapping (interview 1) and a possible me tree (interview 2) activity, followed by a semi-structured interview to discuss the drawings. The interviews will be approximately 60 to 90 minutes in duration, including time for drawing and de-briefing. The focus group discussion will involve all the young people interviewed at your organization, and will centre on participants’ felt levels of preparedness for discharge and will be of the same approximate duration. All of these activities will take place at (name of organization) on a day and time that is mutually convenient.

Second, data will be collected from social workers and professional child and youth care workers (CYCWs) during a focus group discussion. One social worker or professional CYCW from each of the four participating organizations will be recruited. One focus group session comprising all of these individuals will be held at a mutually identified, off site venue that is conveniently situated. The focus group will discuss the views of social workers and professional CYCW’s about the resilience and possible selves of the young people who have taken part in the study, their professional evaluation of transitional services and the challenges and successes they have experienced. The focus group will be approximately two hours in duration, not including any travelling time.

Third, a focus group discussion will be held with auxiliary child and youth care workers (non-professional CYCW’s), and two participants will be recruited from each site to make up this focus group. The same process as for the previous focus group will be followed. The following criteria apply to participants from the social workers, the professional child and youth care workers and the auxiliary child and youth care workers:

- Must be registered in the appropriate category with the SACSSP
- Preferably have at least five years’ experience in the field of child and youth care work
- Preferably have at least two years employment at the current CYCC

Consent to participate and for recording will be secured from each individual prior to the commencement of the interviews and focus groups. Participation in the study is voluntary and
Respondents may withdraw their involvement at any time. Refreshments will be provided at the focus group meetings, but no compensation will be offered to any respondents who consent to participate in this study.

Respondents’ confidentiality and anonymity will be respected at all times. All identifying information will be deleted from the drawings produced from the interviews with young people, and omitted in the transcripts of interviews and focus group discussions. I will keep copies of the drawings, but the originals will be returned to the young people.

The results of this study will be made available to relevant stakeholders, and a summary report will be presented at the research sites for any of the participants or other interested parties.

If you have any queries about the study, either before or after it commences, I can be contacted on 083 384 8181 or by email at suebond.socialwork@gmail.com. My supervisor is Prof. Adrian van Breda, and he may be contacted at the University of Johannesburg: 011 559 2804 or avanbreda@uj.ac.za.

Should you consent to your facility being part of this research I will travel to Port Elizabeth to meet with the different groups of proposed participants to introduce myself and the study. Literature will be provided to the individuals from each group for them to take away and consider. Interested social workers/child and youth care workers can make contact with me directly. Young people can indicate their interest to their social worker; I will follow up with the social worker at a later stage.

Thanking you in anticipation of your assistance with this study

Yours sincerely

Sue Bond

PhD Candidate, University of Johannesburg
Annexure 2. Invitation to participate in research letter to social workers

Attn: (name of social worker)
Organization name
Address
Per fax/email/post

Date

Dear

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN CARE LEAVING RESEARCH: “THE DEVELOPMENT OF POSSIBLE SELVES AND RESILIENCE IN YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE”

I would like to invite you to participate in the abovementioned research. I am a registered social worker, resident in East London, currently engaged in a PhD study at the University of Johannesburg. The study has been approved by the University of Johannesburg ethics committee (letter attached), and will at all times adhere to the ethical standards and responsibilities when undertaking research.

The title of the study is “the development of possible selves and resilience in young people leaving care” and the purpose of the research is to identify qualities and aspects of resilience in young people leaving care, and to what extent these, their possible selves, are identified and developed. The study also proposes to engage young people leaving care in a discussion with regard to their feelings of preparedness for leaving care. In parallel with this the experiences and views of caregivers (social workers and child and youth care workers) will also be solicited.

Care leaving is a neglected aspect of study, and little literature exists that examines the experiences of young people leaving care in South Africa. In comparison to international the international arena, South African policy is negligible. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the small, but growing, body of literature about care leaving in the South African context, that may be influential in shaping evidence based interventions and policy. Social workers have a valuable contribution to make, as they
have extensive experience and knowledge of the field which is often an under-utilized resource. It is also anticipated that making care leavers the focus of the study will bring their voices to the forefront of any ensuing discussion, which is a crucial foundation for the development of genuinely young people centred programs.

I have identified four child and youth care centres in the Port Elizabeth area, and will be recruiting one social worker from each site to participate in the discussion. Your involvement will consist of taking part in one facilitated focus group discussion lasting approximately two hours. The focus group will be held at a central venue.

Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary and there is no compensation offered for taking part. Consent to take part in the research and consent for the discussion to be recorded will be secured before the discussion commences, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality will be protected at all stages of the research process; all identifying particulars will be deleted from the transcripts of the focus group discussion, and you will be referred to by a pseudonym in the transcripts and eventual write up.

The results of this study will be made available to relevant stakeholders, and a summary report will be presented at the research sites for any of the participants or other interested parties.

If you have any queries about the study, either before or after it commences I can be contacted on 083 384 8181 or by email; suebond.socialwork@gmail.com. My supervisor is Prof. Adrian van Breda, and he may be contacted at the University of Johannesburg; 011 559 2804 or avanbreda@uj.ac.za.

I will be travelling to Port Elizabeth to meet with anyone who is interested in taking part in this study and to answer any questions you may have.

Thanking you in anticipation of your assistance with this study

Yours sincerely

Sue Bond

PhD Candidate, University of Johannesburg
Annexure 3. Invitation to participate in research letter to CYCWs

INVITATION FOR CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORKERS

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN CARE LEAVING RESEARCH: “THE DEVELOPMENT OF POSSIBLE SELVES AND RESILIENCE IN YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE”

I would like to invite you to participate in the above research project. I am a registered social worker, resident in East London, currently engaged in a PhD study at the University of Johannesburg. The study has been approved by the University of Johannesburg ethics committee (letter attached), and will be carried out in an ethical and responsible way.

When young people leave the child and youth care centre they face many challenges and their lives can be very difficult. Very little is known about how young people manage after they leave the child and youth care centre; what strengths they have, what resources they make use of and what support systems they have, which is why I am interested in finding out about their resilience. Child and Youth Care Workers play an important role in the lives of the young people in their care, and your input could make a valuable contribution to this research.

If you would like to take part in this study please read the following carefully:

- Two child and youth care workers from each child and youth care centre are needed for the study
- Must be registered with the SACSSP as a child and youth care worker
- Preferably have 5 years’ experience in the field of child and youth work
- Preferably 2 years’ experience at this child and youth care centre
- You will take part in one group discussion with other child and youth care workers from other child and youth care centres
- The group discussion will last approximately 2 hours
- The group discussion will take place at a central venue
• Your participation is entirely voluntary; you will not be paid for taking part in the discussion.
• Your name will not be revealed to anyone. You can chose a name that I can use when I am transcribing (writing) the discussion and in the report.
• The report will be provided to all relevant stakeholders, and I will come back to the child and youth care centre and present a summary of the research to anyone who has taken part, or who is interested in the results.
• If you have any queries about the study, either before or after it begins I can be contacted on 083 384 8181 or by email; suebond.socialwork@gmail.com. My supervisor is Prof. Adrian van Breda, and he may be contacted at the University of Johannesburg; 011 559 2804 or avanbreda@uj.ac.za.

I will be travelling to Port Elizabeth to meet with anyone who is interested in taking part in this research to explain further or to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and I hope you would like to take part in this study.

Yours sincerely

Sue Bond

PhD Candidate, University of Johannesburg
Hi My name is Sue Bond and I am a social worker. I am studying for a degree at the University of Johannesburg, which means I HAVE TO DO RESEARCH.

I am interested in hearing from young people who live in a children's home and who will be leaving soon to begin life as an adult.

I would like to know what you think your future holds and what preparation you have had for moving on from the children's home.

If you have any questions you can ask me and we will go along or you can send me an email suebond.socialwork@gmail.com

As I am still a student I have a "teacher" called a supervisor. His name is Adrian Van Breda. If you want to check anything with him his email address is avanbreda@uj.ac.za
What will it involve?

Two individual interviews with me
and one group interview.

The interview will be recorded and I will write the recordings up later. The recordings and all other documents will be kept in a safe place and only heard/read by me and my supervisor.

Not much is known about how young people in care think about their futures. I hope that this study will fill that gap. I also hope that the information from this study might be used to make things better for other young people still in a children’s home.

Confidentiality

Everything we talk about will be kept confidential, unless you tell me about something illegal, or that you are being hurt or are going to hurt someone.

What if someone reads it and knows its me?

You can choose a name for me to use instead of your real name. Any information, like where you live, names of your family which children’s home you stay at, will be changed or left out.

Must I say yes?

You don’t have to agree to take part in this study.

if you do say yes, you can change your mind later.

What about my parents?

It is important that your parents, or the person who looks after you, knows about the study and agrees that you can take part.

If you would like to be apart of this study, I will give you a letter to give to them that explains all about the research.
Dear parent/guardian/caregiver,

My name is Sue Bond and I am a social worker based in East London. I am currently studying for my PhD through the University of Johannesburg. My field of research is young people who are currently in a children’s home, and who will be leaving the care system to begin adult life. Your child has indicated an interest in participating in my study.

Not much is known about the experiences of young people in children’s homes as they prepare to leave the care system, and I believe that the views of young people in care can make a difference to how services might be provided in the future, which is why I have an interest in this subject.

I will have two individual interviews with your child, followed by a group discussion with all the young people who agreed to take part from the same children’s home. Your child’s confidentiality will be protected at all times, and any information that might potentially identify people or places will be removed from all research material. The interviews and group discussion will take place at the children’s home, after school hours. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and there is no payment of any kind given for taking part.

The study has been approved by the University of Johannesburg ethics committee, and meets all ethical standards for carrying out research with young people. If you have any questions you can contact me via email at suebond.socialwork@gmail.com or you can leave a message with the social worker at the children’s home and she will pass it on to me.

If you do NOT agree that your child can take part in this study please would you sign the page below and send it back to the children’s home before (date).
Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours sincerely

Sue Bond

I (please print your full name) __________________________________________

Do NOT consent for (please print your child’s full name)

_________________________________________________________________

To take part in the proposed research study “the development of possible selves and resilience in young people leaving care”.

Sign __________________________________________________________

Date __________________________________________________________
Annexure 6. Life-map instructions and interview schedule

Interview schedule: Life map

Objective 1: describe and discuss YP’s view of their futures and identify resilience factors and possible selves.

Interview opening

Hi. I’m pleased to see you again. How have you been since we last met? I would like to get to know you a bit before we start, so I was wondering if you could tell me a little about yourself. What kind of things do you like to do in your spare time? Where do you come from? When will you be leaving the children’s home and how are you feeling about that?

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. This is the first of three sessions we will have. Today I would like to ask you to draw a life map of how you see your life at three different points: immediately after you leave the CYCC, three years from now and five years from now. You can draw your map however you like. When you have finished we will talk about your map.

This looks interesting; please would you tell me about your life map?

I wonder how you might go about making ………………. happen?
Do you know anyone who has ……………………………?
What resources are available to you that might help you? (if answers are generalized use probing questions to explore personal characteristics, people, and community assets)
What do you see as your strengths?
Please would you tell me about times when you have been successful?
How do you think these strengths, resources and successes will be helpful to you in the future to help you get ahead?
What do you think might work against you?
Can you think of anything that might get in the way of …………………?
How do you think you might sort that out?
What difficulties have you overcome in the past? How did you do that? Was there anyone who helped you? Could you tell me how they helped you?

How do you think these experiences can help you to get where you want to be?

Closing

Before we end today’s session, is there anything you would like to add to your life map or to our discussion? I was wondering what it was like for you to complete this activity and if you think it has been useful? Thank you for the work you have done on this life map. I will see you next week for the second of our three sessions together.
Annexure 7. Consent form for YP

Consent form
Young People in Care

I, ________________________________, agree to participate in this research. The following points have been explained to me;

1. Participation is entirely voluntary and there is no payment for taking part in this research.
2. I can withdraw my consent at any time.
3. The focus of this research is possible-selves and resilience in young people leaving care.
4. My participation consists of three separate interviews. I will take part in two individual interviews, during which I will work on a life map and possible-me tree. Each of these activities will be followed by a discussion. The third session will be a focus group discussion with other young people, from the same child and youth care center who have consented to take part in this study.
5. The drawings I produce will be copied by the researcher and the originals returned to me.
6. The copies of the drawings may be included in the final research document, but all identifying particulars (such as names and places) will be deleted.
7. Although no discomfort or stress is foreseen, should I experience any discomfort or stress I reserve the right not to answer any question at any time during the group session or individual interview.
8. Should I experience discomfort or distress the researcher will provide details of counseling services available to me at FAMSA, Port Elizabeth.
9. Participation in this research is entirely confidential and information will not be released in any individually identifiable form.
10. The researcher will answer any questions I wish to ask about this research now or during the course of the research process.
11. The results of the research will be made available to me in the form of a presentation of the findings.
Signature of participant  

Signature of researcher  

Sue Bond  
email: suebond.socialwork@gmail.com  
Tel: 083 384 8181  

Research supervisor: Prof. A. van Breda  
email: avanbreda@uj.ac.za  
Tel: 011 559 2804
Annexure 8. Consent to record interviews and use of written material

USE OF AUDIO RECORDINGS AND WRITTEN MATERIAL FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES – PERMISSION AND RELEASE FORM.

Participant Name: _____________________________________________

Contact details:
Address: ______________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________

Telephone no: _________________________________________________

Name of researcher: Sue Bond

Level of research: D Litt et Phil

Title of research: The development of possible selves and resilience in young people leaving care

Supervisor: Prof. A. van Breda

Declaration
(please sign in the blocks next to the statements that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Signature:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The nature of the research and the nature of my participation have been explained to me verbally and in writing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I agree to participate in an interview and to allow audio-recordings of these to be made.</td>
<td>Signature:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The audio-recordings will be transcribed only by the researcher.</td>
<td>Signature:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Once the data has been transcribed the recordings will be destroyed.</td>
<td>Signature:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date:

Witnessed by researcher:
Annexure 9. Life-map drawing
Annexure 10. Extract from reflexive journal

Monday 20/4/15
I am finding the global statements from some of the YP very hard to unpack; for example when I ask “who might help you with this” the response is “the aunties (SWs or CYCWs), but when I say “that’s interesting, how might they help you” YP either just stare, give an embarrassed laugh or simply repeat “they help us” or say “they just do”. I tried to circle back by asking for an example of a time when the aunties have helped, with the same response. Am getting the same response from their life plans; it’s as if just saying “I’m going to be a…..” is enough to make it happen. The follow up questions seem to provoke anxiety and resentment; sometimes serves to shut the interview down. So I move onto something else, or go back to less threatening content.

But today I noticed it’s impacting on how I collect the data. I feel like the dream killer; a bubble burster of note. In one interview I found I was avoiding unpacking the global statements. So, after taking some time to decompress, I realized that these interviews are a bit like the therapeutic process in a way. Sometimes a session is uncomfortable for the client, but it is what the client does with the discomfort between sessions that produces growth. This could be the same kind of process. Some of the YP have clearly not thought about their future selves, beyond the statement “I want to be a…..”. It will be interesting to revisit these statements next time and see if there has been any development.
I find I am worrying that the data is going to be insufficient, although the fact that the YP can only answer with a global statement can be a finding of itself. But it’s really worrying me in terms of their futures. I find myself becoming annoyed with the staff who are, in a sense, allowing this to happen. I would like to ask why these YP have been allowed to get to this stage in their stay at the CYCC and their future planning is seemingly so thin. Am going to have to guard against a ‘tone’ coming through when I hold the focus group. Also, I’m going to have to be cautious in how I interpret and write up the data.
Annexure 11. Revised life-map interview schedule

Interview schedule: Life map

Objective 1: describe and discuss YP’s view of their futures and identify resilience factors and possible selves.

Interview opening

Hi. I’m pleased to see you again. How have you been since we last met? I would like to get to know you a bit before we start, so I was wondering if I had to ask your CYCW/teacher/SW/best friend about you, what do you think they might say? That’s great. Thank you. Would you mind telling me a little about yourself? What kind of things do you like to do in your spare time? What do you most like/dislike?

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. This is the first of three sessions we will have. Today I would like to ask you to draw a life map of how you see your life at three different points: immediately after you leave the CYCC, three years from now and five years from now. You can draw your map however you like. When you have finished we will talk about your map.

This looks interesting; please would you tell me about your life map?
   I wonder how you might go about making ………………. happen?
   Do you know anyone who has ………………………………?
   What resources are available to you that might help you? (if answers are generalized use probing questions to explore personal characteristics, people, and community assets)
   What do you see as your strengths?
   Please would you tell me about times when you have been successful?
   How do you think these strengths, resources and successes will be helpful to you in the future to help you get ahead?
   What do you think might work against you?
   Can you think of anything that might get in the way of …………………?
   How do you think you might sort that out?
What difficulties have you overcome in the past? How did you do that? Was there anyone who helped you? Could you tell me how they helped you?

How do you think these experiences can help you to get where you want to be?

**Closing**

Before we end today’s session, is there anything you would like to add to your life map or to our discussion? I was wondering what it was like for you to complete this activity and if you think it has been useful? Thank you for the work you have done on this life map. I will see you next week for the second of our three sessions together.
Annexure 12. Possible-me tree interview schedule

Research Objective: Describe and discuss YP possible self.

Thank you for being here today. This is the second of three sessions we will have. Today’s activity is a possible me tree. People think about themselves in the future quite a lot, who they might like to become, and we call these our possible-selves. Today we are going to explore your possible-selves using the possible-me tree.

Step one: Consider

1. If you think about yourself for a minute. What are your goals? And what do you see as your strengths and weaknesses? Please would you write them on the hand-out?
2. Now, please think of three aspects, or branches, of yourself and write them in the first columns on the second hand-out. (Provide examples only if YP is struggling to understand.)

Step two: Think

So now that you’ve identified three branches of yourself………

3. What words best describe you as a (insert the aspect of self the participant has identified, e.g. friend/student/athlete)…..?
4. What do you hope to achieve as a (as above)………..?
5. What do you expect to achieve as a………..?
6. What do you fear as a …………?
7. Please would you write them into the columns on the second hand-out?

Step three: Sketching

8. I’ve given you some paper, pencils and coloured pens. Using what you have written in the second hand-out would you please draw a possible self tree. The branches are the parts of yourself that you have written into the first column of the second hand out. Then you can complete the tree with your hopes, expectations and fears.
Step four: Reflect

9. Please would you tell me about your possible self tree.
10. Which branches have the most positive words?
11. Which branches have the fewest positive words?
12. Which branches have the most negative words?
13. Which branches have the least negative words?
14. What made you think of those branches of yourself? (use probing questions to ascertain origins of possible selves: knowledge of own strengths, role models, mentors).
15. If we look at what you hope to achieve as............ what strengths do you think you have that might help you?
16. Has anyone told you that these branches of yourself might be possible?

Step five: Planning

17. If you look at your tree and your goals, what do you think you might need to do to make this happen?

Closing

Thank you for working on your possible me tree today. What was it like for you to do this activity? I wonder if it might be helpful to you? Before we close, is there anything you would like to add to your drawing or our discussion? This is the last session we will have just you and I together. I will come back next week for the last time, and we will meet up with everyone else who has taken part in my study for a group discussion.
Annexure 13. Possible-me tree worksheet

Step 1: Consider your goals, strengths and weaknesses and write them down below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="Image1.png" alt="Goal Icon" /></td>
<td><img src="Image2.png" alt="Strengths Icon" /></td>
<td><img src="Image3.png" alt="Weaknesses Icon" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 2 Think; how would you describe yourself as…? What do you hope/expect to achieve as…? What do you fear as…?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch of self</th>
<th>Describe yourself as…</th>
<th>What do you hope to achieve as…</th>
<th>What do you expect to achieve as…</th>
<th>What do you fear as…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Branch 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annexure 14. Revised possible-me tree interview schedule

Interview schedule: Possible me tree interview schedule

Research Objective: Describe and discuss YP possible selves.

Thank you for being here today. This is the second of three sessions we will have. Before we begin with today’s activity, as I was listening to the recording of our last session I noticed that you mentioned (topic to be discussed). We didn’t talk much about it at the time, but I’m interested to know more. Before we start today’s activity, please would you tell me about your idea of (topic)?

Thank you, that was very interesting. So, moving on to today’s activity, which is a possible-me tree. People think about themselves in the future quite a lot, who they might like to become or who they are afraid of becoming, and we call these our possible-selves. Today we are going to explore your possible-selves using the possible-me tree.

Step one: Consider
1. If you think about yourself for a minute. What are your goals? And what do you see as your strengths and weaknesses? Please would you write them on the hand-out?
2. Now, please think of three aspects, or branches, of yourself and write them in the first columns on the second hand-out. (Provide examples only if YP is struggling to understand.)

Step two: Think
So now that you’ve identified three branches of yourself........
3. What words best describe you as a (insert the aspect of self the participant has identified, e.g. friend/student/athlete)…..?
4. What do you hope to achieve as a (as above)...........?
5. What do you expect to achieve as a.........?
6. What do you fear as a ............?
7. Please would you write them into the columns on the second hand-out?
Step three: Sketching
8. I’ve given you some paper, pencils and coloured pens. Using what you have written in the second hand-out would you please draw a possible self tree. The branches are the parts of yourself that you have written into the first column of the second hand out. Then you can complete the tree with your hopes, expectations and fears.

Step four: Reflect
9. Please would you tell me about your possible self tree.
10. Which branches have the most positive words?
11. Which branches have the fewest positive words?
12. Which branches have the most negative words?
13. Which branches have the least negative words?
14. What made you think of those branches of yourself? (use probing questions to ascertain origins of possible selves: knowledge of own strengths, role models, mentors).
15. If we look at what you hope to achieve as............ what strengths do you think you have that might help you?
16. Has anyone told you that these branches of yourself might be possible?

Step five: Planning
17. If you look at your tree and your goals, what do you think you might need to do to make this happen?

Closing
Thank you for working on your possible me tree today. What was it like for you to do this activity? I wonder if it might be helpful to you. Before we close, is there anything you would like to add to your drawing or our discussion? This is the last session we will have just you and I together. I will come back next week for the last time, and we will meet up with everyone else who has taken part in my study for a group discussion.
Annexure 15. Completed possible self activity & possible-me tree drawing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch of self</th>
<th>Describe yourself as...</th>
<th>What do you hope to achieve as...</th>
<th>What do you expect to achieve as...</th>
<th>What do you fear as...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Branch 1</td>
<td>Helping people when they need help.</td>
<td>Making friends to help them be friendly with others.</td>
<td>People not to like me.</td>
<td>People want to make friends some of them don't like me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch 2</td>
<td>People can be sick to make them sick.</td>
<td>Help sick people when they need medication.</td>
<td>People to be proud of me.</td>
<td>When I can't help the people they are dying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch 3</td>
<td>Do my best and work hard to make my dreams come true.</td>
<td>To really do my best work and achieve my goals.</td>
<td>People to see my hard work.</td>
<td>People don't see my hard work and try to work they are trying to make challenges for me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What's the plan?

Hoped for possible self

- Making friends to the lonely people.
- To help the sick babies.
- To do my best and work hard.

Action steps

- Always tell lonely people that they can come and talk to me.
- Tell them that I will always be there for them.
- To look after small babies.
- To make them realize that there is someone that loves them.
- To do my best at school.
- To always work hard.
- Don't what people going to say about me just to work hard.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feared possible self</th>
<th>Action steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I want to make friends and they don't want to be friends with me.</td>
<td>I will leave them and make other friendly friends for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can't help the babies and they are dying.</td>
<td>I will be more friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People don't see my hard work and they don't want to make decisions for me.</td>
<td>I believe that I will do my best to save the babies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To do the best I can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I won't let others bolt up my future for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will just keep on doing what is right for me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annexure 16. Interview guide focus group with YP

Interview schedule: focus group with YP

Hi everyone. Thanks for being here today. I see you enjoyed the pizza. How have you all been since I last saw you? Can I just check that you all know one another before we start?

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this final interview, which is a group discussion to talk about any services you might have received that are aimed at getting you ready for leaving the children’s home. I would also really like to hear about how you see your futures after you leave here.

May we begin by discussing how you see your futures after you leave the CYCC?

Research Objective 1: describe and discuss YP’s view of their future.

1. As you are about to leave the CYCC, how do you see your futures?
2. What are you most looking forward to after you leave the CYCC?
3. I’m wondering what concerns you might have about leaving care?
4. What do you think you have going for you as you leave the CYCC?
5. If you were in charge of putting a program together for YPLC, what would you put in it?

Research Objective 3: interventions and services aimed at transition from care and YP’s evaluation of them.

1. How and when were you told about leaving care?
2. What has been done to help you get ready to leave? (if answers are generalized use probing questions for more specific details, e.g. practical preparation such as identity documents, bank accounts, drivers licenses, employment opportunities, life skills such as cooking, budgeting and general home management, links to resources in their family and/or community and include structural resources such as health facilities, public libraries, universities, FET colleges)
3. When did this preparation begin?
4. If you had to evaluate the preparation you have had, how would you rate it (good, very good, not good)?
5. What things were helpful/useful for getting you ready to leave the CYCC?
6. What made these things helpful/useful?
7. Were there any things that you didn’t find to be helpful?
8. What was it about them that wasn’t great?
9. What services are available to you after you leave the CYCC?
10. Do you think these services (if any) will be helpful to you? In what way(s)?
11. How ready do you feel to leave the CYCC?
12. What challenges do you think you might face when you leave the CYCC?
13. Let’s rate these in order of biggest challenge to least challenge.
14. How do you think the preparation services have equipped you to deal with these challenges? (work through the challenges one by one). In what ways?
15. What, in your view, could be done, between now and the time you leave, to help you feel more ready to leave the CYCC?

Closing
Would you like to add anything that you feel you haven’t said, or that you feel I have missed before we close? This is our last session together; would anyone like to share how they are feeling about this time together coming to a close. I can say for my part that I have thoroughly enjoyed working with you all. I hope you all have a great final year at school, and wish you all the best for next year.
Annexure 17. Social workers consent form

Consent form

Social Workers

I, _________________________________________________, agree to participate in this research. The following points have been explained to me;

1. Participation is entirely voluntary and there is no payment for taking part in this research.
2. I can withdraw my consent at any time.
3. The focus of this research is possible selves and resilience in young people leaving care.
4. Participation is limited to one, facilitated focus group discussion with the possibility of a further personal interview if the researcher requires clarification on any point.
5. Although no discomfort or stress is foreseen, should I experience any discomfort or stress I reserve the right not to answer any question at any time during the group session or interview.
6. Should I experience discomfort or distress the researcher will provide details of counseling services available to me at FAMSA, Port Elizabeth.
7. Participation in this research is entirely confidential and information will not be released in any individually identifiable form.
8. The researcher will answer any questions I wish to ask about this research now or during the course of the research process.
9. The results of the research will be made available to me in the form of a presentation of the findings.

____________________________  ____________________
Signature of participant           date

____________________________  ____________________
Signature of researcher           date

Sue Bond
email: suebond.socialwork@gmail.com
Tel: 083 384 8181

Research supervisor: Prof. A. van Breda
email: avanbreda@uj.ac.za
Tel: 011 559 2804
Annexure 18. Interview guide focus group with social workers

Focus group interview guide: social workers
Thank you for agreeing to take part in this group discussion. I appreciate you taking time out of your day to take part in this research. The purpose of this discussion is to give you the opportunity to discuss how you see the futures of the YP in your care, their resilience and possible selves, and what services are available to them as they leave the care system. I realize that this is a challenging area of practice, and so would like to hear about the successes and challenges you experience as you help YPIC to move out of the system.

Objective 2; how do social workers and professional CYCW’s view the futures of YPIC
1. As you know, this study is focussing on resilience and possible selves in YPLC, so I was wondering what the term ‘resilience’ means to you.
2. What do you think are the characteristics of a resilient care leaver?
3. In your view, what role does resilience play in the lives of YP as they leave care?
4. In your view, what contributes to the development of this resilience?
5. How can this kind of resilience be developed in YPIC?
6. What is done at your organization to promote resilience?

Objective 2: how do social workers and professional CYCW’s view the futures of YPIC
1. I am wondering what kind of future you see ahead of the YP shortly to leave the care system?
2. What has your experience been of care leavers and their futures?
3. Can you think of any successes?
4. In your view, what contributed to those success stories?
5. If you think of those YP who may not have managed to be “successful”, what would you say hindered them?
6. What, in your view, helps YP to move into their futures?
7. And in your view, what hinders them?
Objective 3: what services are available to YPLC,

1. Moving on to care leaving, when does preparation for leaving care begin at your organizations?
2. What does the preparation entail?
3. Is your agency able to provide transitional support after the YP leave care? If so, what kind of support and for how long is the support available to YP?
4. Are there any policies for leaving care at your CYCC?
5. How best do you think YP can be prepared for leaving care?
6. What do you see as the role of the CYCC and social worker in the preparation process?

Objectives 4 and 5: successes and challenges in facilitating YP transition from care

1. If you think care leavers (either present or past) and the services available to them, can you think of any successes you would like to share?
2. What challenges in respect of care leaving (families, YP, resources, programs) do you experience?
3. What, in your view, do YPLC need the most as they prepare to exit the system, as they leave the system and with regard to follow up services?

Thank you for taking the time to be here today. Is there anything you would like to add, or you feel I haven’t addressed in this discussion before we close?
Annexure 19. Consent form for child and youth care workers

Consent form

Child and Youth Care Workers

I, _________________________________, agree to participate in this research.

The following points have been explained to me:

1. Participation is entirely voluntary and there is no payment for taking part in this research.
2. I can withdraw my consent at any time.
3. The focus of this research is possible selves and resilience in young people leaving care.
4. Participation is limited to one, facilitated focus group discussion with the possibility of a further personal interview if the researcher requires clarification on any point.
5. Although no discomfort or stress is foreseen, should I experience any discomfort or stress I reserve the right not to answer any question at any time during the group session or interview.
6. Should I experience discomfort or distress the researcher will provide details of counseling services available to me at FAMSA, Port Elizabeth.
7. Participation in this research is entirely confidential and information will not be released in any individually identifiable form.
8. The researcher will answer any questions I wish to ask about this research now or during the course of the research process.
9. The results of the research will be made available to me in the form of a presentation of the findings.

__________________________________________  ____________________________
Signature of participant                          date

__________________________________________  ____________________________
Signature of researcher                           date

Sue Bond
email: suebond.socialwork@gmail.com
Tel: 083 384 8181

Research supervisor: Prof. A. van Breda
email: avanbreda@uj.ac.za
Tel: 011 559 2804
Annexure 20. Interview guide focus group with child and youth care workers

Interview schedule: focus group with child and youth care workers
Thank you for agreeing to take part in this discussion; I know that CYCW’s are busy people and I appreciate you taking the time to be part of this research. CYCW’s are in a special position because you have daily contact with the YPIC, and so your input to this research is very valuable.

Objective 2: CYCW’s view the futures of YPIC
Please would you tell me a little about the older children you look after; those who are almost adult and will be leaving the CYCC soon?
How do you think these YP will cope when they leave the CYCC?
What kind of problems do you think they might face?
In your view, what makes them strong?
In your view, what makes them weak?
What kind of future do you see for these YP? (follow up with probing questions if necessary).
Probing questions would include:
Can you give me an example of that?
When you say……………..could you tell me what you mean?
Could you be more specific?
When last did you experience this………….that you have described?
Is it like this for anyone else?

Objective 3: services that facilitate transition from care.
I’m wondering how you see your role (how you help them) in preparing YP to leave the CYCC?
What do you think they need as they leave the CYCC?
What do you think the CYCC does to help the YP get ready to leave the CYCC?
Objective 4: successes and challenges in facilitating transition from care

Can you think of any times when your efforts to prepare young people to leave the children’s home have been successful?

In your view, what makes it difficult for you to help YP to prepare for leaving care?

What would you like to be able to do to help the YP in your care move on?

Closing

Before we close this discussion, is there anything that you would like to add, or that you feel has not been covered? Thank you so much for taking part in this discussion group. I appreciate your time and input. I will come back to the children’s home to give you feedback about the results of the study once it is finished.
### Interview Register Transcript

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>236</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Something that you have achieved, something that you’ve done or it hasn’t have to be it something like winning the miss south Africa competition, it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>237</td>
<td>GEORGINA</td>
<td>Oh there is, yes tannie uhm I think it was last month tannie uncle I took me to [sport event] tannie and then I must, then I uhm yes then I had to talk t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>238</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Oh wow okay so wow what was that like for you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>239</td>
<td>GEORGINA</td>
<td>Yoh tannie I was so shy tannie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Hmm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>241</td>
<td>GEORGINA</td>
<td>And I didn’t want to speak tannie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>242</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>But you did speak so you were faced with a difficult task because you felt shy and you did it and how did you feel afterwards after you’ve done it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>243</td>
<td>GEORGINA</td>
<td>Yoh tannie I feel so proud of myself tannie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>244</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Okay alright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>245</td>
<td>GEORGINA</td>
<td>Because tannie yoh I never spoke to so many people before tannie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Transcript extract from possible selves interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>GEORGINA</td>
<td>Like tannie maybe uhm my friends tannie like them uhm tannie like friends there tannie at home tannie I always think they got when I'm a nurse neh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Uh hmmm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154</td>
<td>GEORGINA</td>
<td>Because they took me now I'm a nurse tannie and, and they, and they don't know that I work hard to be a nurse, they, I think, I always think they go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Okay and that bothers you because?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>GEORGINA</td>
<td>Because maybe tannie when uhm maybe we are fighting and like that tannie then they say uhm if you are, if you were here tannie you, you wouldn't</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Hmm okay alright and you mentioned in your previous, the first interview that you had that you don't want that be at home like your sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>GEORGINA</td>
<td>Ja tannie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Okay so alright and they will make decisions for you, what kind of decisions right first of all who would make those decisions for you to, who are you a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>GEORGINA</td>
<td>Uhm like friends tannie they maybe they would say no you not good enough for a nurse maybe you can be a social worker or police or like that tannie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Annexure 22**

Transcript extract from possible selves interview
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>You've mentioned the opportunities a couple of times now. So what kind of opportunities are you talking about? Tell me about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>Well there are children that go to the reading centre, we have students help with school work; we get clothing and food obviously. And everything the staff do to make my life more comfortable here? And how will that contrast with life at home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>So, that makes your life more comfortable here? And how will that contrast with life at home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>Well, it's not easy because my mother is not working and she's travelling a lot for everything so I can't go to her for help and my mother need money to go and study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>And the gentleman, tell us your concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>Life is gonna be very tough. Because here at CYCC they make everything that you can get it tomorrow, and to help us with our subjects we've got the learning centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>So what do you guys think you have going for you as you leave the Children's Home? What's going for you? What is working in your favour?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Nosipho</td>
<td>That I can go study further without my parents paying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>Same here... CYCC is gonna pay for my studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>And you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 48   | Natalie| I haven't asked CYCC to pay for anything so, but I know I can come back to CYCC and I know that they will be able to help me.
**Interview Register Transcript**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Thank you for coming this morning, I really appreciate it, especially because you were actually doubly booked and we didn’t know. The reason we are here today is...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>I think there is a lot of emphasis placed on children to perform in school and get a Matric. But the problem is Matric is not enough these days, you need an NQF level 4 or 5. How do you think we should approach this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>We’ve had few successes before, with children going out at grade 10, some of them we help them take a direction, some just find their own ways, what do you think?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Overall I’m getting that there is not a great deal of optimism about their future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>I think we try to be very optimistic. I mean from my side we have the half-way house program which she just mentioned now, and that’s for children that have failed school. I think that’s the way to go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Francis</td>
<td>And that’s why I say most of them that don’t have the potential to go to university so you can’t simply forget them. She can get some other thing or get some training, and then she can be productive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>Yes, but its funding. We had the debate for years now with them, but they are funders from Europe and they feel that they want to see the Doctorate, the final degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>We do support children in tertiary, but we have seen more success with children that went out and came back after a year or two, knowing what they want to do, knowing what they’re good for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Ok so these are the kids that have left the system with whatever level of schooling they got. They have gone off, done their own thing and then came back but they probably need help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>Not services, only support in terms of tertiary studies. Some of them get bursaries and we might contribute the transport fees, or some pocket money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td>Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>I think sometimes they are afraid how the outside world is gonna take them up. In the community especially. Because they used to be in the children’s home or the child care facility and now they must go into the bigger world. And they don’t know how they’re gonna fit there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Because the CYCW’s always there to care for them. And now outside, there’s not that caring side, always, for them. Because the CCW is there day and night for them. So they can’t face that.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>Ja. They don’t know what’s there for them on the outside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>Sometimes they go to the situation that is not change. It is still the same. But now they had to face it. And it’s hard for them to cope with that situation, because their time to be on the inside is finished. Even the families they haven’t changed. So they [YP] have to learn to cope to those things all over again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>And another thing is, we’ve got this child and we’ve taken him in to the CYCC. He was sleeping on the floor, not in a bed. Now, he is here for 8 years and now, he has to go back. Do you see the problem? Here he has a home, he is fed, he is getting toiletries, everything, but now, when the time comes, there is that lack. A lack of, how can I put it, um, he gets home and it’s changing. And you the CYCC don’t know what is happening now. He must start from the beginning. And he don’t know where to start. Maybe, from my side now, if the institution can send the children every second week home, so that he can get used to that environment. You can’t say that he can’t go home, its not right that he can’t go home, because at the end he has to go home. And we are making it difficult for the children. So at the end we are creating criminals, because they are on the street now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>It’s like she said now, because if a child has gone outside for the weekend and they can’t cope. If they’re with their host, and they told they can’t go out at night, they’re not happy and they’re making trouble. So they can’t cope outside with the rules. Because they are more in the institution than they are at home. Say for instance, in the bigger picture, most of them [parents] is drinking. Now the social worker see there is drinking there [at home], now the child can’t go out. But if it was school leavers, they must cope with that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>But for me, I feel like if the child, even with the situation with the parents, they must allow the children to go and visit with the parents. Not go to the foster parents, or to the weekend out parents, but to go to their homes. So they have to go to live in that environment. They’re having a break while they are inside before they having to go there again. Because if they don’t learn to that, they going to see that their mothers are going to neglect them. If they are going to the expensive people that they are not living to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>And sometimes there’s a child with a family situation, and they fall pregnant. They just thinking “ach, I’m tired now of struggling in this world, so I will get pregnant” and just things like that. Then after they go out they fell pregnant. Because pregnancy is a big issue when they is going out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Have you experience of that? Young women leaving the home and falling pregnant?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>Ja, only three months and then they coming back and ask at the CH “do you have some kimbies or milk” or so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td>Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>And what happens when they ask those questions, when they ask for kimbies or milk. What happens?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>If they have some extra there, then they give for them, but if there isn’t then they can’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>I want to just say that most of the time they coming back to the CH because they want things for the baby and for themselves and at the end of the day they think it is the right thing for the baby and for themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Evelyn</td>
<td>Ja. They come back to the institution for help, Ja.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Ja and then that baby end up in the institution. Most of the time that happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>I would just like to say that the system, itself, doesn’t work. The reason I’m saying that is because most of the time the children have been taken from their parents for some or other reason. But the system becomes too protective. Like in December, one of my children comes to visit. I was working. Here like, you come let the children play outside, you know where the children are. They can’t go outside the gate, have to be watching them all the time. They don’t have that at home. I can give a child here R200 and they will be buying sweets, that’s not how they must be outside. To me it doesn’t much work. They are not getting them ready for outside. It’s not real. And then they don’t cope outside. That’s how I think. They are not trained to survive there. Even me, I’m giving my child pocket money for the month. R150. To me that R150 is enough. You can’t ask me for R10 airtime; where’s that R150 I gave you. But here, they take that money and if they feel like it they put it [spend it] on a dolly. They don’t understand. They must put it oneside for the whole month. So for me the system doesn’t work like the outside. It would be better if we could try to explain, to show them, to teach them that responsibility. Otherwise they won’t be able to do those things. Here if they lose something or they break they just go to the office and get a new one.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annexure 26. Mind map resilience themes
## Annexure 27. Extract from code list

### Qualitative Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Life after discharge age 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.01.1</td>
<td>gap year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.01.2</td>
<td>working while studying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.01.3</td>
<td>skill center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.01.4</td>
<td>living independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.01.5</td>
<td>lots of different ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.01.6</td>
<td>ideas but not realistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.01.7</td>
<td>vague ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.01.8</td>
<td>global ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.01.9</td>
<td>get a bursary and be studying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.02</td>
<td>Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.02.1</td>
<td>definite career plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.02.2</td>
<td>don't know yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.02.3</td>
<td>complete education to grade 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annexure 28. Ethical clearance letter

The Faculty of Humanities
Academic Ethics Committee
University of Johannesburg
11th March 2014

Prof Prof A D Van Breda (Supervisor)
Department of Social Work
Faculty of Humanities
University of Johannesburg

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Title of research: The Development of Possible Selves and Resilience in Youth Transitioning Out of Care
Student name: Mrs S Bond
Student No. 201463855

Dear Prof Van Breda

It is the judgement of the “Faculty of Humanities Academic Ethics Committee” that the research proposal, and the relevant documents submitted to us in support of a request for Ethical Clearance, has clearly indicated that the standard practice of ethical professionalism will be upheld in the research.

From a research ethics point of view, the Faculty of Humanities Academic Ethics Committee therefore endorses the proposed research.

Yours sincerely

Professor Zelda G Knight
Chair: Faculty Ethics Committee