

**UConn**

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
AND FAMILY SCIENCES

# Doctoral Dissertation Defense



Presented by

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*Subjective Well-Being of Youth  
with Experience in Foster Care:  
A Mixed Methods Evaluation*

**Friday, August 4, 2023  
2:00 p.m. via WebEx**

**Advisory Committee**

Major Advisor: Preston Britner, Ph.D., HDFS

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## **Dissertation Abstract**

There are approximately 4,000 children in foster care in the state of Connecticut at any one point in time, roughly 100 of whom emancipate each year with no permanency plan. Studies show that youth who choose to remain in extended foster care (when the option is available to them) have more negative outcomes compared to their non-fostered peers, but better outcomes across multiple domains than their fostered peers who age out at 18. However, no difference has been found in college degree attainment. The University of Connecticut Rising Scholars (URS) program was created to help youth with experience in foster care (YEFC) graduate high school and pursue a postsecondary education or career. This study interviewed 26 young adults who had participated in the URS program. All youth completed quantitative survey measures and a qualitative semi-structured interview. This study employed a convergent mixed methods design, meaning that qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently and integrated through a narrative approach during analysis. Qualitative interview questions were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step approach. This study's findings map onto previous reports of high levels of SWB for YEFC and contributes to the literature by providing insight into the life paths and decision making for YEFC after high school. The experiences and outcomes of the YEFC in this sample are consistent with other studies that suggest that youth need more than an academic mindset and a desire to go to college to achieve their goals. YEFC need to be supported in their education, training, and career goals by their DCF workers, postsecondary institutions, and other formal and informal relationships. Future research should incorporate more mixed methods approaches to continue informing best practices and points of intervention.