



Aged Out:

The Stories That Built Us

DALTxCreative

MEET THE TEAM



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aged Out: The Stories That Built Us is a podcast created by Diane Sumoski and the W.W. Caruth Jr. Child Advocacy Clinic at Southern Methodist University. By telling the stories of foster youth who have aged out of the system, they are spreading awareness for the cause and giving them a platform to be heard.

As it stands, Aged Out is not reaching a wide audience. We set forth to improve their listenership within the constraints of their budget to create a realistic approach that can increase their listenership in easy, quick, and manageable steps using resources and connections they already have.

To increase listenership, we sought ways to improve the podcast through conducting secondary research into areas surrounding aged out youth, social media marketing, and philanthropic passions. We conducted a survey to assess our next steps and gain a basis of understanding for our audience. Additionally, we learned of some connections that were being underutilized and gauged how to better format and promote the podcast to gain more listeners. By making changes in just four areas, branding, formatting, partnerships, and promotion, we believe the podcast will reach a larger audience. Our strategy focuses on structuring the podcast in the most user-appealing and digestible manner and utilizing free promotional tools.

The stories speak for themselves, but change is not possible without a party who is willing to listen.

BRAND IDEAL

At the center of the podcast *Aged Out: The Stories that Built Us* lie the hearts of former foster kids from Texas who have aged out of the system. Interviews with the men and women who have aged out of the foster care system echo through their listeners' ears, sharing their experiences. The podcast creates a platform for their stories and perspectives to be heard with the hope of educating its listeners and inspiring change in the broken system.

The transition to adulthood is challenging in itself: seeking education, finding employment, finding housing, and finding stability on one's own for the first time. For those who have aged out of the foster care system, these challenges are magnified. They experience higher rates of educational failure, likely due to the constant changing of environment and schools, and greater rates of unemployment. They are more likely to live below the poverty line, have mental illness, and have housing instability. Additionally, they are much less likely to have support of kin as opposed to other youth their age, and state-wide services to help are limited and disjointed. Frankly, they are not set up for success. (Courtney, 2007)

According to Jim Stengel, a brand ideal is a brand's reason for being; it's the reason it exists and the change it seeks to make in the world. It's a meaningful goal for the brand that aligns the organization to better serve its audience (Stengel, 2011) .

Currently, the podcast **Enables Connection**, or enhances the ability of people to engage with one another and the world in meaningful ways by connecting former foster kids' stories to its audience, but it lacks the call to action necessary to make change. In order to **Impact Society**, or affect society broadly by challenging the status quo and redefining categories and transform the system, it will need to overcome certain weaknesses and leverage its strengths.

The mission of *Aged Out: The Stories that Built Us* is to empower former foster children by having their voices heard, using their stories to educate the public, and creating a forum to share their perspectives on how to improve the foster care system. In order to impact society, it is crucial to expand the breadth of this podcast to reach a larger audience that can effect change.

SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT Analysis is a tool used to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that a company or brand may be facing at a moment in time to better determine the best course of action for its continued success.

STRENGTHS

NETWORK

- Diane Sumoski's former students from the W.W. Caruth, Jr. Child Advocacy Clinic and podcast alumni who have shared their stories.
- Southern Methodist University's nearly 12,000 current students, large network of alumni, and current faculty.

CONTENT

- Emotional and engaging stories with captivating subject matter and genuine motivation.

WEAKNESSES

INCONSISTENT MISSION STATEMENTS

- Aged-Out's mission statement – “to empower former foster children by having their voices heard, using their stories to educate the public, and creating a forum for their perspectives on how to improve the foster care system” – and podcast content do not align. The podcast focuses primarily on the first half of the mission statement to empower and educate, but many episodes lack the call to action on how to improve the system.

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

- Poor use of Instagram, twitter, and Facebook social media platforms. Too few posts and sporadic use, with small periods in time of activity.
 - Little engagement; few shares, likes, and comments, or interactions with current followers.

LACK OF METRICS

- Little to no measure of current listenership in terms of both demographics and psychographics.

OPPORTUNITIES

REBRANDING: MAKE PODCASTS MORE INTERESTING & USER FRIENDLY

- Unique and informative podcast titles that help to define what each episode is about in order to pique interest. For example, “Brandon’s Story” could become “Brandon’s Story: Hospitalized, abused by a foster parent, separated from siblings.”
- New branding material with intriguing imagery that is visually appealing and helps the audience to better connect the subject matter to the imagery.
 - Topic focused-episodes or episodes that are centered around individual issues such as homelessness post-ageing out.
 - Sneak-peaks, or tidbits of episodes released early to engage with the audience and build anticipation.
 - Highlights, or briefings of previously aired episodes, to give the audience a taste of what each episode is about so they know if it will interest them further.
 - Expanded range of podcast guests, such as lawyers, legislators, case-workers, and advocates for increased and diverse perspectives.

UTILIZING THEIR NETWORK FOR WORD-OF-MOUTH (WOM) MARKETING

- E-newsletters to effectively use the accessible network and spread the word about the podcast amongst Diane Sumoski’s email contacts consisting of former students and professionals in this particular field.
 - Encourage sharing of podcast within the newsletter. Empirical evidence has shown that sharing the podcast on own social media has an effect on listenership.
 - Ask current students in the class to share the podcast on their personal social networks. To motivate participation, students can be awarded extra-credit.

THREATS

COMPETITION

- A more popular and active podcast entitled *Aged Out* exists on all of the platforms in which *Aged Out: The Stories that Built Us* operates. Having a shared name with a podcast about the marching band experience can be confusing to new listeners looking to listen or learn about *Aged Out: The Stories that Built Us*
- A podcast entitled *Fostering Change* also has a focus on creating change in the foster care system. Because this is advocacy work, another podcast centered on making change in the system is an advantage rather than a hindrance, as the bottom line is to make positive change.

RESOURCES

- Small Budget hinders the ability to enact costly measures.
- Turnover of student-staff can lead to turmoil with a change in mindset or outlook on the project's future.
- Limited production capabilities prevent expansion of project to other forms of media such as video.

SWOT CONCLUSIONS

How their strengths can be applied to the identified opportunities:

Using the large network of the W.W. Caruth Jr. Child Advocacy Clinic, alumni, and connections to professionals in relevant industries, a monthly newsletter containing a link to the podcast can help to increase listenership. Additionally, light encouragement could be given to share the podcast on personal social media platforms to further increase listenership. After Shaquille, the current student director of the Aged-Out podcast, shared the podcast amongst his friends, the listenership skyrocketed to 140 listeners in just three days. Furthermore, Diane Sumoski can encourage current students to share the podcast using incentives such as a raffle for a Spotify gift card or as an extra-credit opportunity. The genuine content of the podcast can be better marketed with branding material that will be more appealing to listeners. With a more appealing image that better identifies the goals of the podcast, titles that explain the content of the episodes, topic-focused episodes, sneak peaks, highlights, and an expanded range of guests, they can generate more clicks and therefore an expanded audience.

Actions that can overcome weaknesses when pursuing opportunities that were identified:

Cohesive rebranding of social media over all platforms in addition to an increase in word of mouth marketing and the sharing of the podcast on an individual's personal social media will help to spread the podcast and create awareness without spreading resources thin on their own social media management. Most listening and viewing platforms have metric tools with information regarding listenership origin, such as social media traffic (clicked on link from social media platform), search traffic (keyword search), direct traffic (visits from web search or non-social media website), or from digital advertisements. This opportunity's success would be measured using the social media traffic metrics.

How Aged Out's strengths can eliminate threats that were identified:

The genuine motives of the podcast with the benefit of rebranding will help to overcome its weaknesses and lack of resources as well as its same name competitor. Additionally, when used optimally, their network can be used to their advantage to outperform their competitor.

How Aged Out can minimize or overcome its weaknesses in light of the threats that were identified:

A mission statement that matches their current trajectory, an effective use of social media, and a better idea of their audience, in addition to either a change in podcast name or enforcement of their trademark, can help them overcome their competitive threat and lack of resources by better understanding their audience and how to market their podcast.

RESEARCH

In order to better understand the questions that we were posing and the situations that aged out youth were facing, we conducted secondary research. This was done to formulate the questions we were to pose to our respondents, provide a basis for our questions, and compare how our respondents aligned with previously conducted research. We conducted secondary research into the hardships of aging out of the foster care system in order to better understand the client's mission. We also researched the current podcast branding and promotion techniques as well as strategies of successful podcasts and nonprofit organizations in order to understand ways 'Aged Out' can improve and grow their audience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

HARDSHIPS FACED BY AGING OUT YOUTH

Foster Youth aging out of the system face a plethora of hardships in all facets of life. They face difficulties receiving medical care; they are primarily insured with Medicaid which limits their ability to see certain providers (Agathis et al., 2018). They are oftentimes diagnosed and are dealing with mental health issues stemming from abuse and turmoil in their childhood. According to one study focused in the state of Wisconsin, the number of youth who faced maltreatment (neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse) by their out-of-home (foster) caretaker was 68% of males, and 46% of females (Courtney et al., 2001). In many states, including Texas, foster youth lose foster care support the year they turn eighteen without nearly enough resources to keep them on their feet (McCoy et al., 2008). Other US states including Maryland, New York, Missouri, and Illinois allow youth foster care benefits until the age of 21 (McCoy et al., 2008). They face abuse, neglect, higher rates of unemployment, homelessness, and incarceration. According to Courtney et al. (2001), in Wisconsin between 1995 and 1996, 23% of males and 24% of females reported experiencing physical abuse, 2 individuals of each sex reported sexual abuse by a foster care parent, and 23% of males and 34% of females reported sexual abuse by a relative, sibling, or another youth while in the foster care system. Upon aging out, 32% reported not having enough money most or all of the time, and 44% reported having problems obtaining medical care most or all of the time, 12% experienced homelessness, 18% faced incarceration, 19% faced physical assault, 7% experienced sexual assault or rape, and 37% experienced one or more of the above (Courtney et al., 2001).

Very few youth are provided with concrete assistance such as job training and assistance, practice interviews, housing, access to their medical records, or insurance before aging out (Courtney et al., 2001). They have much bigger hurdles to jump than that of an average teenager with a stable and supportive family life. They are at an extreme disadvantage in comparison. No one is telling their stories even with resources in Dallas, TX such as TRAC or the Dallas City Square Transitional Resources Action Center, which aids foster youth in their transition to independent living through providing employment assistance, educational support and referrals to community partners are resources (Ward, 2019). “Aged Out: The Stories that Built Us” offers catharsis and a platform for their hardships and emotions to be heard. With a larger audience, there is greater potential for structural change to be made regarding these issues.

PHILANTHROPIC PASSIONS

Because we are posing questions about philanthropic passions, it is important for us to first understand why someone would be passionate about a cause to begin with. Research finds that personal values and inclinations are the primary reasons for a person to align themselves with a given cause. Factors that may play into their decision-making process when aligning themselves with a worthy cause include personal taste, preferences, and passions linked to an individual’s experience, as well as their backgrounds, perception of charity legitimacy, and personal impact of their donation (Bashir et al., 2013). According to a study done in the United Kingdom, the most popular causes include medical research, hospitals, children, and overseas aid (Bashir et al., 2013). Additionally, they found that seasonality may play a role when people choose to volunteer or donate (Bashir et al., 2013). In a London based experiment conducted in 2003 to determine philanthropic cause alignment, 250 Londoners were surveyed to see which causes they would donate to (Bennet, 2003). They were asked to donate the complete sum of money to a single cause: cancer care, animal welfare, or human rights. They were further surveyed about their personal values, inclinations, and other characteristics relevant to their choice. They cited age, income, occupation, number of children, social class, and level of education as well as empathetic predisposition, practice of religion, self-esteem, compassion, and sense of social responsibility as considerations. They conducted this experiment based on circumstantial evidence that personal involvement with an issue or cause, potentially has the ability to substantially affect an individual’s attitude and donor behavior towards a particular cause. They defined personal values as a set of preferential standards used in making selections. The three organizations that they used to represent the three causes were the MacMillan Cancer Relief Organization, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and Amnesty International (Bennet, 2003). Ultimately, they found a strong connection between charitable causes and personal values or inclinations. When

we pose the question, “which cause are you most interested in?”, we do so on the basis that the cause they choose aligns with their personal values and inclinations.

When it comes to donating time or money to a charitable cause, we need to take into consideration the socioeconomic factors as well as the racial bias for individuals being asked to donate or volunteer. People most often solicited have higher income (Bryant et al., 2003). In terms of race and sex, white women are most often solicited for time, and white men are most often solicited for money (Bryant et al., 2003). Based on these findings, we may see that white people are more likely to donate time and money, but this is because they are more likely to be asked to donate in the first place and not for any other reason. The purpose of our questions is to gauge how active the respondents are within their communities and what causes they care about. We need to be aware of potential racial and socioeconomic bias in the responses.

SOCIAL MEDIA

When inquiring about social media usage, we need to develop a basis of social media use to compare the responses we receive. According to a Pew Research Center study, Facebook is the most popular platform followed by Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Facebook is so popular that they estimate 68% of American adults use the platform. 28% of all U.S. adults use Instagram, followed by 26% on Pinterest, 25% on LinkedIn, and 21% on twitter (Greenwood et al., 2016). It was also important for us to look into how and what kind of knowledge is shared on social media in order to understand the kind of engagements that people participate in on social media platforms. We found that social media users primarily share tacit knowledge, or personal knowledge, in terms of experiences, know-how, personal insight, personal expertise, and personal belief. Tacit knowledge is entirely dependent on an individual, and is the opposite of explicit knowledge or facts (Panahi et al., 2012). Within a social media space, this is done through social interactions, experience-sharing possibilities, informal relationship networking, observation and listening, and mutual swift trust (Panahi et al., 2012).

We also looked at research regarding social media marketing in conjunction with philanthropy to understand how other businesses effectively used their social media for corporate social responsibility. Using social media marketing decreases overall marketing cost, increases the probability of revenue creation, and allows companies to share information, gain insight from customers, assist clients, and engage consumers in real time (Sajid, 2016). Social media promotion allows for exposure, increased traffic and subscribers, an increase in partnerships with other organizations, increased search engine positioning, increased sales, and reduction in promotional expenses (Sajid, 2016). In terms of philanthropy, in the year 2017, 82.5% of the top 20 and bottom 20 of *Fortune* 100 companies were linked to at least one social media

platform, and 22 out of the 33 which had social media accounts provided a link to at least one type of philanthropic initiative, including cash donation, product donation, service donation, funding grants, and awarding scholarships (Lee & Holladay, 2017). This would leave us to believe that the most successful corporations were actively promoting both their social media and philanthropic causes.

Additionally, we looked into the benefits of social media for nonprofit usage and found that non-profit organizations in particular, can benefit from the use of social media due to their generally limited monetary resources (Curtis et al., 2010). They find that social media tools are especially helpful for non-profit organizations for bettering public relations (Curtis et al., 2010). Research shows that nonprofit organizations in the past have not been able to strategically use websites in an interactive manner that allows for conversations, discussion, and feedback; social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter allow for this interaction (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Nonprofits primarily use Twitter to share information (58%); to build community through giving recognition, sharing events, replying to messages, and soliciting donations (26%); and to incite action through promoting an event, appealing for a donation, selling products, inciting volunteer actions, promoting lobbying, promoting other organizations, and sharing information on how to help (16%) (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). When using Facebook, the most popular strategies include engaging in discussion (74%), sharing photographs (56%), sharing links to external news sites (54%) (Waters et al., 2009). In addition, nonprofits are able to create fundraisers directly through Facebook (Waters et al., 2009).

Finally, we needed to understand the primary reasons as to why people would share content on social media. This study examined how and why people share content on their social media platforms and what it means in terms of viral marketing. Viral marketing is the ability for content or messages to be spread virulently through social media. This is important because of its ability to transcend markets and reach a global audience. Researchers believe that the propensity to share content on one's social platform boils down to their emotional reaction to it. In order to test this hypothesis, they conducted interviews with members of the millennial generation. They were shown two viral YouTube videos: Numa Numa, a 2006 video of a man lip-synching and dancing along to a Romanian song, and Star Wars according to a 3-year-old in which a toddler explains the happenings of episode IV. Both videos have tens of millions of views. When it came to the Star Wars themed video, they found that only participants who were familiar with the franchise would be interested or willing to share the video. While the toddler was cute, it boiled down to the discussion of the movie being their reason to share. When it came to the Numa Numa video, participants said they would be willing to share it because it made them feel happy or they thought it was funny (Botha & Reyenke, 2013). They determined that viewers needed to have an emotional connection to the content in order to share it.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

With a primary goal of increasing listenership, we determined the best way to better understand the potential market for this podcast was through the creation of a survey. Our survey begins by asking general questions in order to gain insight about our survey participants in relation to their passions and philanthropy; what do they care about? Our hypothesis is that those who are passionate about human services are more likely to be or to become a listener of the podcast than those whose passions lie elsewhere. Questions about donating money and volunteering help us gauge how active the respondent is in community service.

Following philanthropy, we ask general questions about podcasts to determine if the audience being surveyed uses similar products. By asking straightforward questions about the kinds of podcasts they listen to, we can provide suggestions to improve the overall format of the podcast. For example, if consumers prefer their podcasts to be a certain length, we suggest either shortening or extending the length of podcasts. By asking on which hosting sites survey participants listen to their podcasts, we can judge if there are any major platforms missing on which the podcast should be uploaded. Our primary goal in this section of the survey is to determine what makes a podcast palatable.

The third section is on social media. Much of our implementation plan involves the use of word-of-mouth marketing through social media and it is crucial to understand the role that social media plays in the participants' lives. To begin, we ask which platforms they use and how often they post or share content on their platforms. We opted to use a Likert scale for this question in order to gauge how often participants feel they are posting or sharing. This is as opposed to quantifiable numbers due to the unlikelihood of the respondent knowing the exact number of posts/shares. The big probing questions that we are asking in this section are in terms of why an individual would share something on their social media.

The following section is all about the podcast "Aged Out: The Stories that Built Us" and overall familiarity with the cause and hardships associated with aging out of the Texas foster care system in addition to the color survey participants associate with the cause. We introduce the mission and ask if they would be interested in listening based on the information provided. If participants answer no, they would not be interested in listening, we ask what would make the podcast more appealing for them to listen to. Furthermore, we ask questions about the podcast imagery and the perspectives they would be most interested in hearing about on the podcast.

On March 27th, 2020 our survey (see Appendix-A) was sent out to a listserv of Dr. Diane Sumoski's colleagues. By the time we closed the survey on April 8th. In order to motivate participation, a \$10 Spotify gift card was promoted in the informed consent. After reading the informed consent, respondents began the survey and questions covered the major areas of philanthropy, podcast listening, social media usage, and finally, on Aged-Out. We garnered a total of 35 respondents, from which only 23 completed the survey. Due to the small sample size, we decided to report all findings as is, including incompletes. The age distribution was rather equitable with 26% being between the ages of 25 and 34, 21% between the ages of 35 and 44, 26% between the ages of 45 and 54, and 21% over the age of 55. Only one respondent was between the ages of 18 and 24. The overwhelming majority of respondents were female at 82.6%. The ethnographic breakdown is as follows: 69.5% White, 17.4% Hispanic or Latino, 8.7% black or African American, and 4.3% Asian or Pacific Islander. When it came to the highest level of education received, our sample was highly educated with 47.8% of respondents' highest level of education was a master's degree, followed by a bachelor's degree at 30.4%, and a doctorate degree at 13.1%.

ANALYSIS

PHILANTHROPY

The causes that the majority (74%) of those surveyed were most interested in were education (37%) and human services (37%). Health, religion, animals, the environment and arts, culture, and humanities ranked lowest. In the last year, most responded they had volunteered 0-5 hours (46%); the remaining responses were scattered but a surprisingly large portion responded that they had volunteered more than 100 hours (12%). 26 of the 32 respondents (81.25%) cared about and/or are involved in local causes including the Dallas Children's Advocacy Center, Buckner International, Alliance for Children, Education Reach for Texas, Vickery Trading Company, Perkins School of Theology, Austin Street Shelter, Meals on Wheels, Dallas Animal Rescue, Texas Association of Black School Educators, Genesis Women's Shelter Outreach, CitySquare TRAC, Lena Pope Home, Fraternal Order of Eagles, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Disability Rights Texas, Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program, Make a Wish, Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services, Human Rights Initiative of North Texas, North Texas Food Bank, and Light the Night. Several respondents mentioned supporting local hospitals such as Parkland Hospital and churches such as Gracehill Community Church. Dallas CASA was repeated among 7 of the 23 respondents. The variety of organizations mentioned provides ample opportunities for partnerships. Additionally, given the number of CASA volunteers in this sample and the inherent relations to the foster care system, it may be worth exploring the idea of bringing some CASA advocates on for a podcast episode.

The respondents felt prompted to volunteer or donate predominately out of a desire to give back to the community and help others in need, particularly children. Many respondents mentioned a sense of gratitude for the opportunities they were given in their own lives and an obligation they feel to help those less fortunate. Some of the outlier/unique responses included feeling a moral or religious responsibility to give back, holiday spirit, and location/when a volunteer opportunity was nearby.

PODCAST

The following set of questions applied to two thirds of the respondents (66.67%) who said that they currently listen to podcasts. Those who did not listen to podcasts were not shown the following questions and were instead directed to the section about social media usage. iTunes (Apple Podcasts) and Spotify are the preferred platforms (56%). The remaining listeners use Google podcasts, YouTube, or Facebook. Based on this information we recommend uploading the podcast to iTunes (Apple Podcasts), Spotify, Google Podcasts,

and YouTube (just an image and the audio). The most popular podcast genre was Society and Culture (15.07%), followed by News and Politics (13.7%), Educational (12.33%), True Crime (9.59%), and Health and Lifestyle (8.22%). Comedy, Stories, Arts and Entertainment, and Religion and Spirituality all tie for 6th (6.85%). Games, Business and technology, Fiction, Talk Shows, History, and Racial Awareness were each selected by one respondent (1.37%).

When selecting a podcast to listen to, the podcast titles were most important to 11 of the 17 who answered (64.71%), followed by the length (23.54%). The podcast visuals were the least important (11.76%). Based on this information, we recommend highly informative yet easily digestible titles. 16 to 30 minutes seems to be the ideal podcast length according to most respondents (47.06%), followed by 31 minutes to 1 hour (29.41%). We suggest keeping the podcast between 16 minutes and 30 minutes based on this response. Respondents' favorite podcasts include Serial, TED Radio Hour, Brene Brown, Armchair Expert, The Popcast, Coronavirus: Fact or Fiction, The History Chicks, Hidden Brain, Who Weekly, and My Favorite Murder. KERA Think and NPR were mentioned by two or more individuals. Unfortunately, these podcasts are all over the map and do not give us a congruent insight into a format or style that people like. Most respondents rely on podcast platforms to inform them of new episodes via a subscribe or follow button (41.18%) or a podcast's recurring and consistent release date (23.53%). Others rely on social media announcements (17.65%) and email newsletters (5.88%). The remaining two respondents rely on their friends or personal searches when they have the time. Because so many respondents rely on the platform to alert them of new podcast episodes, a quick reminder to follow or subscribe within the audio of the episode can help to retain listeners.

New topics or stories in every episode (41.18%) keeps most respondents listening to a podcast, some prefer a continuation of topics and stories in the following episodes (17.65%), and two respondents appreciate a mix of both. 5 out of 17 respondents (29.41%) selected a variety of guest speakers offering different perspectives, while no one selected the ability to contribute to comments, questions, suggestions, etc. Based on this information, we recommend new topics or storytellers every episode rather than splitting a story into two, except on special occasions such as at the beginning or end of a season.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The social media platforms respondents typically use are Facebook (32.26%), Instagram (19.35%), LinkedIn (14.52%), Pinterest (12.90%), and Twitter (11.29%). 3 users responded that they do not use social media and were sent straight to the brand-specific questions. We suggest using Facebook and Instagram more consistently to reach these audiences. On a scale from 1 (infrequently) to 5 (frequently), respondents reported engaging in social media most frequently for seeking news, information, and/or educational or

career resources ($M = 3.76$); communication such as emails and blogging ($M = 3.38$); and entertainment such as movies, music, and games. They engage least frequently in philanthropic pursuits such as finding volunteer opportunities or making a donation ($M = 2.20$). Because the majority of respondents use social media to seek information, it would be beneficial for Aged Out to use social media more frequently to share their podcast as well as other relevant links and information.

The surveyed population are not active contributors on social media, with only 3 out of 21 respondents stating they strongly agree with the statement “often share content on my social media”. Most respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement ($M = 3$). This leads us to believe that the majority (58% selected either neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, or strongly agree) do share social media, but they may not all share frequently in their opinion. When they do share posts on social media (regardless of the frequency of usage), they are primarily motivated to do so to bring valuable and entertaining content to others (61.9%), followed by to market causes and brands (19%). 8.3% stated that they used social media for self-fulfillment and to grow and nourish relationships. When asked “what would incentivize you to share something on your social media platform?” responses included – that the content was meaningful or inspirational to others, that they felt the information they were sharing was helpful and informative without being offensive or hurtful (2 respondents), that the content promotes policy change concerning the causes they care about/have a personal connection to (3 respondents), that the content contains personal stories about lesser known injustices or abuses, that the content is something out of the ordinary, that the content promotes a shared value/belief (3 respondents), that the content is positive, that the content is perceived as important, that the content is found to be humorous, and that the content shared is for the benefit of others. Based on their reasonings, many respondents felt incentivized to share in combination with their involvement in many child welfare-based causes such as CASA. We feel that they may be willing to share podcast episodes on their platforms if they resonate closely with a particular episode or just with the cause overall.

AGED OUT

Amongst our surveyed population, the majority (85%) responded that they either somewhat agree or strongly agree with the statement “they know a lot about the Texas foster care system” ($M = 4$). 81% responded that they either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I know the issues youth are facing upon leaving the Texas foster care system” ($M = 4$). This leads us to believe that we have a very well-informed sample in regards to understanding the basis for the Aged Out Podcast. Despite this, only 8 out of 27 respondents (29.6%) have listened to the podcast “Aged Out: The Stories that Built Us”

leading us to believe that there is a strong representative market that the brand has access to that is being missed.

Our next question was posed to only those who have not previously listened to the podcast. Aged-Out's mission statement was provided and when asked "Based on reading the mission statement, would you be interested to listen to the podcast?", of the 19 who responded "No" to having previously listened to the Aged Out Podcast, 11 said "yes" (64.7%), 5 responded "maybe", 1 respondent said "no", and two respondents did not answer the question. When asked specifically why they would or would not be interested, many replied along the lines that they would be very interested in hearing the perspectives of the aged out youth (6 respondents). Others responded that this podcast is very relevant to the work that they do (3 respondents). Those who responded with 'maybe' stated that they do not have a lot of time in the day and would prefer to spend that time listening to "uplifting content". Another respondent stated, "Two fundamental problems: Systemic and interest of the youth. System is slow to meet the needs of the youth. You have varying interests or none at all. Some youth just don't want to "hear" what an older or wiser group of people say." The one "no" respondent stated a hearing impairment and a preference for reading as a reason they would not become a listener. Overall, this is a very positive indication that the mission of the podcast resonates with survey participants and could encourage new listeners amongst the right circles!

When inquiring about perspectives that respondents might be interested in hearing on the podcasts, the most popular was that of foster kids ($M = 5$), followed by social workers ($M = 4$), and Lawyers ($M = 3$). Our recommendation based on this information would be to invite a social worker onto the podcast for an episode so listeners can get a glimpse into their perspective of the foster care system in Texas. Other parties that survey respondents showed interest in hearing the perspectives of included judges, foster parents (4 mentions), advocates, teachers, therapists/psychologist (2 mentions), policymakers, college or trade school recruiters, and CASA members (2 mentions).

When sharing the current podcast imagery, 16 out of 25 respondents (64%) agreed that their current image represents the podcast. While this is the majority, 36% responded that they did not feel the image represents the podcast well. Furthermore, it was reported that the podcast visuals were the least important (11.76%). Given that this is not an overwhelming majority, we feel as though looking at some other options for imagery would be beneficial for the podcast. Suggestions for alternative images from those who did not connect with the current imagery include an image of a teenager/young adult/child who is aging out (4 respondents) and a color image that is serious but not as solemn (1 respondent). When it comes to color associations with the term "aged out", the most popular colors are black (9 respondents ranked 1st), blue (8 respondents ranked 1st), and red (5 respondents ranked 1st). Secondary and tertiary choices with more than 5 people ranking them included red (7),

black (7), blue (5), and white (10). Write-in responses (2) include the color grey. Based on these responses, we believe that black, blue, and red are the colors that should be featured in the aged out podcast design.

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Despite the insightful findings, the survey has limitations. First, the sample size was very small where we received 35 unique responses, but only 23 (65.7%) finished the survey in its entirety. 100% of respondents completed the philanthropy section. 94.8% began the podcast section, but only 85.7% completed that section. 77.1% began and completed the social media section. 77.1% began the brand specific section, but only 71.4% completed the section. Only 65.7% ultimately finished the survey by answering the demographics questions which is a net loss on average of 7.28 percentage points per section completed.

Second, the sample was not representative. Given that this survey was sent out to a very specific group of people composed of Dr. Diane Sumoski's colleagues, we are unable to draw conclusions about demographic bias because we do not have a whole understanding of what this representative sample should look like.

Third, we had fewer open-ended responses which was to be expected as fill in the blanks tend to have the lowest rates of responses (Krosnick, 1999). However, all things considered, many did give full feedback which is extremely helpful in our analysis.

Ultimately, the data shows promising trends that can be implemented to improve the reach of the podcast and grow its audience. These include incorporating volunteers from the organization Dallas CASA, uploading the podcast to Google Podcasts and YouTube in addition to Spotify and iTunes/Apple Podcasts, creating engaging clickable titles, keeping future podcasts between 16 to 30 minutes, sharing new stories every episode, and adding a statement encouraging listeners to subscribe or follow their podcast to get updates. We suggest focusing on Facebook and Instagram as social media platforms to maintain and to post more frequently. We strongly recommend encouraging your audience to share the podcast on their social media as their responses denote that they may be likely to share if they connect to the cause, which many respondents do. We strongly suggest promoting your podcast more strongly amongst your colleagues. 19 of the 27 responding had not listened to the podcast, but after learning more about the podcast through the mission statement, 11 were interested in listening and 5 were on the fence. By just sharing it amongst inner circles who have interest in the cause, the spread of the podcast can be increased significantly. We recommend doing an episode with social workers, as respondents said they were interested in hearing their perspectives, in addition to continuing to share the stories of aged out youth. Though podcast

visuals were not overly important to potential listeners, we recommend using black, blue, and red in the podcast imagery design as respondents most associated them with the term “aged out”. We would also recommend keeping an open mind to changing the podcast picture as many felt that a picture of an aged out youth’s face would resonate better with the audience.

OBJECTIVE & STRATEGY

OBJECTIVE

With a primary goal of increasing podcast listenership, we believe that this could be best achieved through implementing strategies in rebranding, formatting, and podcast promotion. With a larger audience, Aged Out will be able to further share the stories of the aged out youth and inspire change within the broken foster care system. By harnessing Aged Out's large network and engaging stories, with a few minor tweaks to formatting and promotion, we believe that Aged Out can achieve its goal.

STRATEGIES FOR PODCAST REBRANDING AND FORMATTING

PODCAST NAME

Aged Out as a term refers to becoming too old for an institution, activity, or program. While, typically, it is thought to be related to the foster care system, the concept of aging out can apply to anything in life that one can become too old for. In August of 2018, two individuals who aged out of Drum Corps International released the first episode of the "Aged Out Podcast". A few months later, in October, "Aged Out: The Stories That Built Us" released its first episode. Sharing a name within the same industry leads to a significant amount of confusion amongst customers. A simple Google search for the Aged Out podcast will show both podcasts as results. Someone who is suggested to listen to the Aged Out podcast via word of mouth marketing may get an earful about marching bands rather than hearing the stories they intended to listen to. One of the biggest issues for a brand to overcome is having a competitor with almost the same name in the same platform (Baldassarre et al., 2017). Without a trademark on the podcast title, Aged Out, there is little that can be done about having a competitor with the same name. The best course of action is to change the podcast name to something that is easily identifiable and available on all platforms (Baldassarre et al., 2017). The new podcast title should directly refer to the subject matter at heart; the foster care system. We recommend referring to it directly rather than using a term that can have multiple identities.

Some name suggestions are listed in preferential order below:

- Fostering Insight
- Fostering Insight from the Aged Out
- Fostering a Better Future
- Voices of the Aged Out
- Stories of the Aged Out

Fostered Out

Fostered Out: The Stories That Built Us

Stories from The Foster Care System

Project Aged Out: The Stories That Built Us

Aged Out Project Podcast

Aged Out: Stories from The Foster Care System

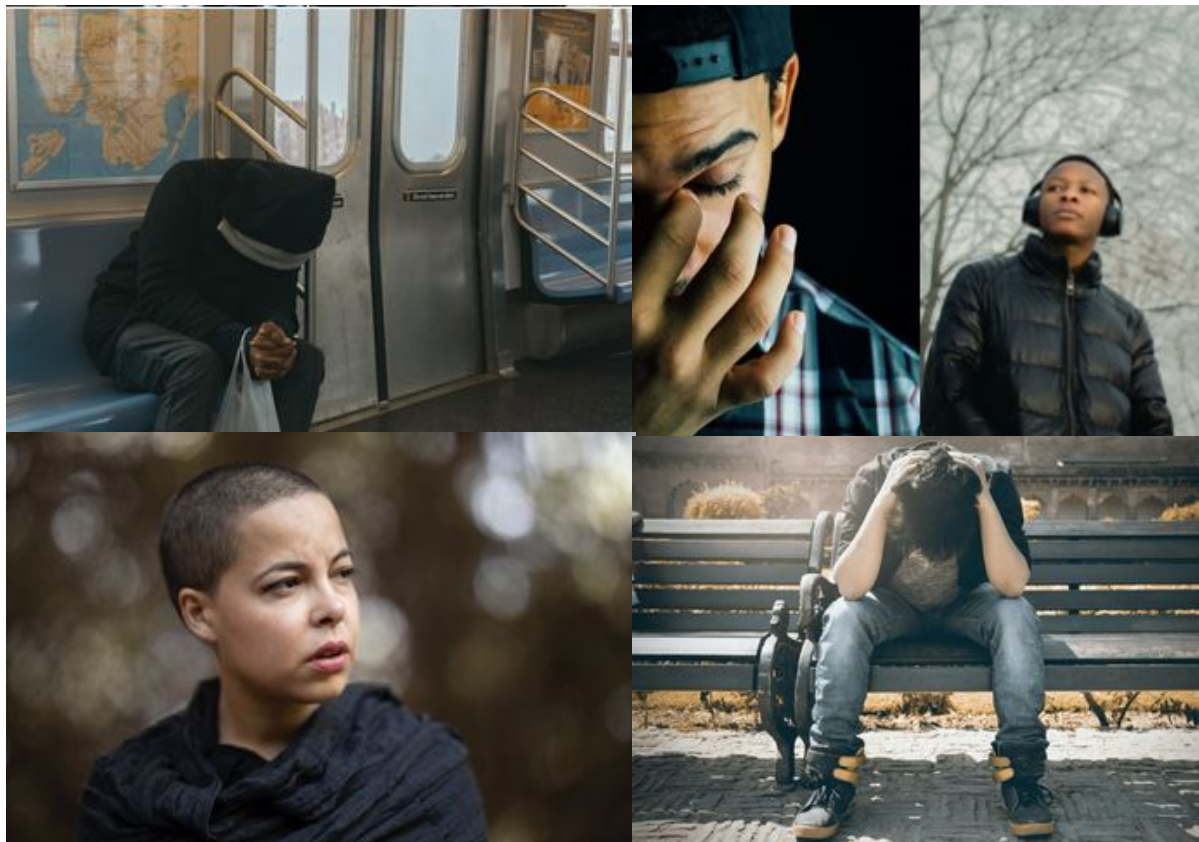
Aged Out: Fostering a Better Future

Aged Out: Stories of the Broken Foster Care System in Texas

PODCAST IMAGERY

When reviewing our primary research, many respondents felt as though an image with a youth's face should be the imagery that is used for the podcast. A color image with a somber pensive face of a person who is either a teenager or a young adult could be very powerful. Free stock photography and images that can be used commercially can be sourced from websites such as Pexels, Unsplash, and Pixabay.

Here are some images from the website Pexels that we believe could work for the podcast's imagery. See Appendix-B for more specific image attributes:



PODCAST LOGO

A separate logo that can be added to the image and used on other platforms is also encouraged. We recommend using the colors blue, black, and red as suggested by our research. Related icons and symbols that can be used in the design include the podcast symbol which consists of an abstract microphone shape surrounded by sound waves, a play button which is represented by a right directed triangle, a ribbon which is a symbol of awareness or support, and hearts which are oftentimes associated with non-profits. Alternatively, we recommend the use of the SMU logo.

EPISODE TITLES

We suggest altering the podcast episode titles to include information about the content of the episode. By including brief information that summarizes the episode in the title, the potential listener will have a better understanding and can thus pique interest. For example, a better title would be “Elisha’s Story: From Foster care to DFPS Youth Specialist” rather than just “Elisha Pt. 1” because it gives context to what the episode will be about. Being interesting is the key to getting people to click according to Forbes writer Susannah Breslin. An interesting title that doesn’t give everything away leaves the potential listener wanting a little bit more (Breslin, 2012). On the flip side, if all information is left out, then there isn’t the same propensity to click. The person on the other side of the screen needs just enough of a tease of what they are going to get to play the podcast episode.

EPISODE LENGTH AND FORMATTING

Based on the information we received from conducting our survey, we believe the ideal length for the podcast stories should be kept under 30 minutes in length, with 40 minutes in length at the longest, as 16-30 minutes in length was the most preferable length denoted by respondents. Longer winded podcasts, especially those containing heavier material, can leave the listener feeling fatigued and less likely to finish the podcast episode. To keep the podcast moving at a steady pace, we recommend pre-planning the podcast episode and the points of their stories that are most important to hit and pay attention to the time (Lewis, 2014). Don’t be afraid to get the podcast back on track, so long as you are respectful to the guest and their story. In the same vein, we believe that returning to your format of having a new guest every podcast rather than splitting the podcast episode into two would be better. Because the podcast is only uploaded once a month, 30 days is a long time for a listener to wait for the conclusion of a story. After such a long waiting period, they may lose interest or forget altogether (Lewis, 2014). Additionally, iTunes will unsubscribe those who do not listen to more than five new podcast episodes in a row (Lewis, 2014). Keeping podcasts and stories to a shorter length will help with the digestibility of the podcast and the

ease of listening. The occasional two-parter is okay, but we would suggest doing it for either a season opener or ending.

PROMOTION STRATEGIES FOR PODCAST GROWTH

Based on acquired information from various expert sources, there is collective agreement on the most successful podcast strategies, all of which we hope will guide and inspire Aged Out's promotional strategies going forward.

CONTENT AND PLATFORMS

In their annual "How to Promote a Podcast" guide, Castos, a podcast hosting and analytics platform, shared the top tactics their podcasters are using to promote their shows in 2020. Before listing strategies, they emphasize the importance of creating a podcast that is valuable, unique, and sticky. The content for the podcasts and the social platforms should be engaging, consistent, and help build strong relationships with their audience to not only capture audiences but also sustain listeners long term. In addition to iTunes and Spotify, they suggest using TuneIn, iHeartRadio, Soundcloud, Podbay, and Podtail. Castos encourages converting the podcast into an audio file for YouTube accompanied by the brand image or logo. Breaking up each full-length episode with shorter clips between 1 to 3 minutes long is ideal for newer listeners who are not yet dedicated followers as well as for social media posts (Castos, 2020).

Within the podcast, it is extremely important to include a call to action asking the listener to follow or subscribe to the podcast, so they can receive updates. The majority of survey respondents marked the podcast platform alerting them as the way they learn of new podcast episodes. If you don't remind the audience to subscribe, there is a good chance that they may miss the next episode. Email newsletters signup forms and/or offering text/email reminders when new episodes are released will help to generate list of contacts for email blasts, promotions, surveys, etc. Successful podcasters also prompt listeners to share and especially leave reviews at the beginning and end of each episode. Many people need at least a straightforward call-to-action to take the next step and, often, more personal approaches such as direct messages or personalized email are most effective. Email marketing is not only a simple and intimate way to connect with listeners but also has the best return on investment of all digital marketing channels. Reviews on podcast platforms are especially important because people often rely on the psychological phenomenon of social proof to inform their decisions and can be a great source of feedback to guide and improve future episodes. Giveaways, contests, or other offers to incentivize reviews are a proven worthwhile investment, and it is just as important to read and be responsive to all

positive and especially all negative reviews. Another simple strategy to gain new listeners is to recycle the back catalog of episodes. From our survey findings, Instagram was second to Facebook in terms of social media usage and popularity. Using Instagram hashtags like “ThrowBackThursday” or “FlashBackFriday” or when the topic of a new episode relates to a previous one, mentioning the episode number gives listeners the option to learn more and drives continued listening. It is critical that social media is not solely used for self-promotion. Rather than just announcing new episodes, asking questions like what followers think of or know about the topic discussed or including an image and bio of the guest is a great way to shift focus from the podcast itself to its listeners or the topic. Hashtags should also be utilized when jumping in on relevant conversations on Twitter. Castos recommends podcasters follow the trending topics on Twitter and include hashtags in their responses for listeners to discover their show (Castos, 2020).

Finally, to expand your audience, in addition to iTunes and Spotify we strongly suggest uploading the podcast to the platforms mentioned by survey respondents, Google Podcasts and YouTube. By adding it to additional platforms you will double your chances of any search algorithm picking up the podcast and new listeners finding it.

PARTNERSHIPS

Word-of-mouth marketing is one of the most effective strategies but the most difficult to “hack”. Finding the right places to spread your message is key, both online and offline. Joining online conversations happening in Facebook groups, on Quora, Reddit, Twitter, etc. or attending relevant conferences, Meetups, or other local places and events where your audience congregates can also be an effective self-promotion strategy for some podcasters. It is important to first focus on contributing valuable information and being a part of the community before mentioning the podcast in order to establish yourself as a thought leader and avoid coming across as “spammy”. Spreading awareness of one’s podcast also requires collaboration with other podcasts, organizations, and speakers on the show. Creating mutually beneficial situations leads to productive introductions and conversations that wouldn't be available otherwise and access to new, complementary, and ideally larger audience. All partners should be provided with pre-written suggested text, images, and links for social posts to make it as easy as possible. Nonprofits should utilize their podcast as a networking opportunity with their own guests as well as finding podcasts to be guests on themselves. A variety of guests will also add interest to episodes and appeal to a wider range of listeners (Castos, 2020). We recommend doing an episode with social workers, as respondents said they were interested in hearing their perspectives, in addition to continuing to share the stories of aged out youth.

Nonprofit PRO is a magazine, website, and daily e-newsletter dedicated to providing nonprofit organizations with management and strategy advice in

addition to resources (Miller, 2019). While the article focuses on how to build buzz in order to reach fundraisers, it includes interesting tips for building awareness in general. It highlights the importance of collaboration, bringing in guest hosts or finding podcasts to be a guest on, and featuring or partnering with relevant organizations. Furthermore, owners at local restaurants, bars, etc. where your target audience frequents may be willing to host events or offer discounts to support an organization. As a possible partner, we recommend reaching out to 'La La Land,' a socially conscious cafe located at 5626 Bell Avenue in Dallas that prioritizes kindness, honest ingredients, and the well-being of others above all else. In 2017 they created the 'We Are One' project, after learning about the staggering statistics of foster youth who age out of the system and are subsequently unable to get or maintain jobs. Employers were not willing to hire youth with no experience, or did not have the patience to teach them so 'We Are One' set out to do it themselves. The project now provides aged out youth help with housing, therapy, and most importantly the job placement and training they need to be successful.

Facebook fundraisers are also an opportunity to generate support for a cause, support related causes, and enable followers to do the same. Most importantly, followers can use their influence to grow a podcast's audience with their personal network of followers. The extent to which a single person influences their personal network of friends, family, and colleagues cannot be understated. As Shaquille Grant, Chief Counsel at the Child Advocacy Clinic, demonstrated, the number of listeners jumped from single to triple digits after promoting a recent episode on his Facebook page. Nonprofit PRO suggests asking followers to share personal stories and photos. Sharing user-generated content on social media shifts the focus to listeners, allowing them to engage in the conversation and eliminating the need to create more original content. The article also suggests creating unique branded gifts such as mugs, tote bags, and t-shirts that can be used for giveaways or sold on the website. Apparel enables listeners to share their passion for the cause and increase awareness of the podcast with others who see it (Miller, 2019). Providing the students in Dr. Sumoski's class, particularly those working on the podcast like Shaquille, and guests who come on the podcast, could be given Aged Out printed t-shirts. This could serve as a way of advertising the podcast.

Brandon Stover (2019) from Evolve Media Network provides step by step guidance for successfully making and marketing a podcast in his own how-to podcast series, which reinforces many of the ideas mentioned in the above articles. A podcast's landing page, he believes, should include video (or audio) clips as well as links to other organizations; this idea was reinforced by similar nonprofits' landing pages.

Reaching out to others in the industry for joint venture opportunities enables a podcaster to reach someone else's audience who may not know about your podcast, gain exposure, and increase listenership (Stover, 2019). Based on our

research findings, we recommend the following three organizations listed below as possible partners:

1. [CASA DALLAS](#)
nnevarez@dallascasa.org
214-827-8961
2757 Swiss Avenue
Dallas, TX 75204
2. [DALLAS CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER](#)
214-818-2600
5351 Samuell Blvd.
Dallas TX 75228
3. [BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF GREATER DALLAS](#)
dalweb@bbbstx.org
888-887-2447
35 Lamar Ave
Paris, TX 75460

Stover (2019) provides a few very interesting original thoughts based on his own experience. He believes it is better to focus efforts on one or two strong social media platforms where the target audience is that delivers valuable information in addition to promoting the podcast. In the case of Aged Out, according to his theory, social efforts should be focused exclusively on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and possibly LinkedIn. Content should be uploaded regularly across all platforms and consistency is key to keep listeners engaged between the release of new episodes. New episodes should be uploaded only on iTunes, Spotify, Google Podcasts, and YouTube ideally the same time every month, so listeners know when to expect them. Given the limited staff and inconsistent delivery of content it is important these social and podcasts platforms are effectively managed and gain significant followers/listeners before attempting to further expand (Stover, 2019).

Stover (2019) also discusses the necessity of providing a backstory and explaining who you are and why you are making the podcast, so listeners understand why they should also care, in addition to having a clear understanding of what to expect from the podcast. Providing a glance into one's personal life can also strengthen listener loyalty; in terms of Aged Out, this advice could translate to a single or series of episodes that covers the history of/evolution of the podcast or a discussion of the making of each podcast with behind-the-scenes images. He found testing out alternate titles and logos and providing incentives for those who provide their input to be beneficial. Allowing listeners to be a part of the process ultimately makes them more invested in its success (Stover, 2019).

CASE STUDIES

Nonprofit Megaphone specializes in Google Grant management for over 300 nonprofits. The compiled list of 20 creative nonprofit marketing campaign case studies provides many ideas that require a minimal budget and work on the part of the organization and can serve as inspiration for Aged Out's future efforts. The list includes Feed My Starving Children's weekly email newsletter that shares the personal stories of children the organization has helped, keeping FMSC constantly on the minds of their supporters. Fun challenges and activities have proven an extremely effective marketing strategy ever since the success of The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge back in 2014, and, more recently, the Make-A-Wish Foundation started an #ArmWrestleChallenge, asking participants to film their match, post it on social media, and tag the foundation. The winner then made a donation, and the loser had to double it. The idea not only helped the organization raise money but also allowed supporters to feel directly involved and share the experience with friends. Similarly, Charity: Water encouraged supporters to pledge on their birthday to help with clean water efforts, asking for donations to Charity: Water on Facebook. Aged Out could do the same, asking younger listeners such as those who are interested in attending SMU and actively following the law school on social media to pledge to the podcast and its mission on their 18th birthday to help share the stories of children aging out of foster care at the age of 18 in the state of Texas (Zylius, 2018).

Best Friends Animal Society matched users with a photo of their "dog twin" which then guided them to a search for adoptable animals. Aged Out could similarly help facilitate connection via social media among alumni. They could also use social media platforms to connect alumni who are artistically, musically, or otherwise creatively gifted with relevant community projects like Crossroads Community Services in 2013. With the help of Saatchi & Saatchi Wellness, Crossroads started the Street Fare project, which used street art to motivate New Yorkers to volunteer, donate, and spread the word about the Community's soup kitchen and food pantry. Volunteers were asked to use their creativity to draw faces on city sidewalks with the mouths strategically around potholes or filled with garbage. The faces were photographed and posted on social media. The project jolted people out of their complacency and bridged a connection between the people walking on urban streets and those eating and suffering on them. It highlighted the difficulties of the homeless community where their audience was looking - the ground. It is an interesting example of creatively thinking not only about 'how' but also 'where' to share the message in order to reach the right audience.

Finally, The ONE Campaign, an international nonprofit dedicated to fighting extreme poverty and preventable disease, asked participants to choose a number and make a video clip. The organization then combined these into a long video counting all the way to 130 million, a number that represented the girls around the world who are denied an education. It was another simple way for

supporters to participate in the mission, and the final video could then be shared via personal networks to further spread the word (Zylius, 2018). Aged Out could do the same on a smaller scale based on any of the shocking numbers below provided by the National Foster Youth Institute (Gaille, 2017):

- More than 23,000 children will age out of the US foster care system every year.
- After reaching the age of 18, 20% of foster care children will become homeless.
- There is less than a 3% chance for children who have aged out of foster care to earn a college degree at any point in their life.
- Tens of thousands of children in the foster care system were taken away from their parents after extreme abuse.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS:

Given the direct competition between the ‘Aged Out’ podcasts, Aged Out: The Stories That Built Us should change their name to eliminate confusion. Additionally, a name with a direct reference to the foster care system will further clarify the content of the podcast to consumers.

Using an image that shows a face will allow the audience to better connect to the stories. This can be done for free using free stock photography sites such as [Pexels](#). In addition, creating a logo gives the podcast more branding options for different platforms and websites.

Episode titles should include brief and clickable information about the content of the podcast episode to increase listenership. By giving the audience more information without them having to read the entire description, they will be more likely to click on and therefore listen to the podcast episode. Podcast episodes should be kept between 15 and 30 minutes, and the content of each story should be kept to a single episode except for on special occasions to keep the audience interested.

Given Aged Out’s limited staff and resources they should focus efforts on building a large following on 2 to 3 social media platforms and delivering valuable content consistently. Based on their target audience and survey responses they should select from Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or Instagram.

Podcast episodes should be uploaded to Google podcasts, one of the preferred platforms according to survey respondents, and converted into a video file for YouTube. This would extend the use of the content they are already making and expand Aged Out’s presence online. Videos should be accompanied by a related image(s) or the brand image. The videos should include show notes, links to the website, social pages, and a podcast episode within the caption.

It is critical that social media is not solely used for self-promotion, platforms should be used to share valuable content. Aged Out should share

user-generated content, recycle their older episodes, current foster care-related stories in the news, and local volunteer opportunities, on social media to further eliminate the need to create more original content and establish them as an industry leader and a useful resource. They should be especially active during holiday seasons; The holidays are all about connection and caring for others and people are especially inclined to give back.

Given the success of word-of-mouth marketing for Aged Out, they should increase their efforts to build their social currency and utilize their own personal and professional networks to raise awareness and drive traffic to the podcast both on and offline. Listeners should be prompted to subscribe, share, and leave reviews at the beginning and end of each podcast episode and guests on the show should be provided with suggested text, images, and links for their own social posts.

Partnerships with organizations, like CASA Dallas, would provide access to a new, complementary audience. CASA advocates for abused and neglected children and since its inception has helped thousands of children find safe homes. CASA has thousands of followers on their [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#) pages and was mentioned by numerous survey respondents as an organization they care about and/or volunteer for already. Reaching their much larger audience by inviting a CASA advocate onto the Aged Out Podcast and/or cross-promotion on social media platforms would help to significantly increase listenership. A partnership with CASA would also enable current listeners a way to actively participate and make a real difference in the foster care system, rather than just passively listen to stories *and* diversify the podcasts guests.

CREATIVE STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

Below are some examples of our strategies at play. Everything has been created by us and can be used commercially, not including the social media mock ups, as they are just visual representations of what posts could look like.

LOGOS

We believe that a logo is essential for any business to brand itself. We spent time coming up with some ideas for a logo. The type face we have chosen is also available for commercial use and free of charge.



LOGO 1

Logo 1 uses a microphone to symbolize a podcast and hearts acting as sound waves to denote a non-profit cause. The universal podcast symbol is of a microphone, usually a stylized letter “i” surrounded by sound waves. We opted to use a more modern style of microphone for this logo design.



Aged Out:
The Stories That Built Us

LOGO 1A

Logo 1A includes both the logo and the podcast title. We chose the typeface Avenir because of its clean style



LOGO 2

Logo 2 combines the audio frequency lines and a play button to indicate the organization is a podcast, and the home and heart indicate the podcast is about the foster care system. Placing the play button inside the house implies they are stories from inside the foster care system and those living in the temporary and permanent foster care homes. Hearts are a symbol of empathy and caring and are commonly used in foster care and adoption-related organization logos.

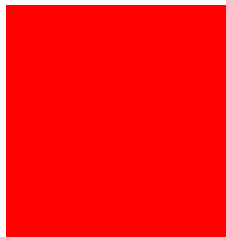
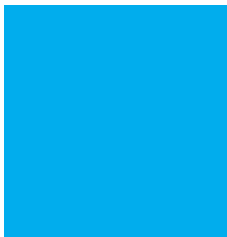


LOGO 2A

Logo 2A used the same house as in logo 2; it is used as the “O” in Aged Out and is filled in to match the bold text. The bright **blue color** is used for **foster care** awareness and the black text helps to emphasize it and makes it pop.

**LOGO 3**

Awareness ribbons are symbols meant to show support or raise consciousness for a cause. The blue ribbon is associated with many causes that affect children, including foster care awareness. The red lines above it again symbolize the audio frequency/ sound waves typically used to indicate a podcast.

COLORS

R=2 G=173 B=237 R=255 G=0 B=0

TYPEFACE**AVENIR BLACK**

Alternatively, an SMU logo can represent the podcast due to the credibility and prestige associated with the school's name and symbol.

SMU®

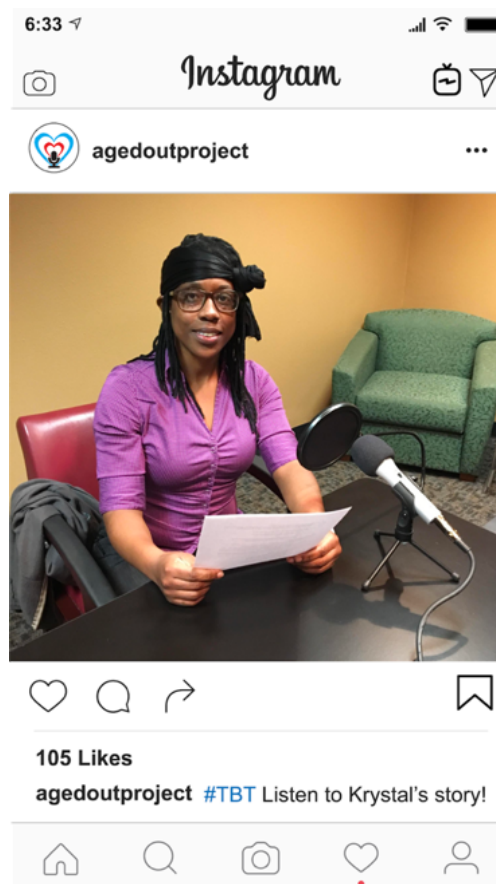


SMU®

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES

INSTAGRAM

We previously discussed some strategies for using Instagram; below is an example of a “throwback Thursday” or “#TBT” post. We suggest including a longer caption that alludes to some of the content of the podcast episode or the podcastees’ experience recording the episode. For example: “We loved having Krystal in a year ago to record her story! It is absolutely amazing what she has overcome. If you have yet to hear her story, give it a listen! Link in bio #TBT.”. ‘Link in bio’ refers to placing a link to the podcast episode in the bio due to the inability to link within posts. We strongly suggest sharing within Instagram stories. Additionally, without 10,000 followers, you are unable to include a swipe up link within stories. For this reason, we strongly suggest including a link to the episode most recently referred to in the Instagram account bio.



FACEBOOK

One way Aged Out can initiate a partnership with Dallas CASA, as we recommended earlier, is by inviting a CASA advocate to be a guest in an

episode. This should be followed by cross-promotion on social media platforms, like the Facebook Fundraiser below. Facebook fundraisers are a great opportunity to generate support for a cause while promoting the podcast. Working with CASA would provide access to a new, complementary audience, who may not know about Aged Out and would facilitate real action among current listeners, who are passionate about aged out youth.

We recommend Aged Out staff to also share the fundraiser on their personal timelines to leverage WOM. When we posted a Facebook Fundraiser on behalf of Aged Out on our timelines, we received immediate engagement (donations and likes). The test fundraiser included a brief description of Aged Out and Dallas CASA and the following statement:

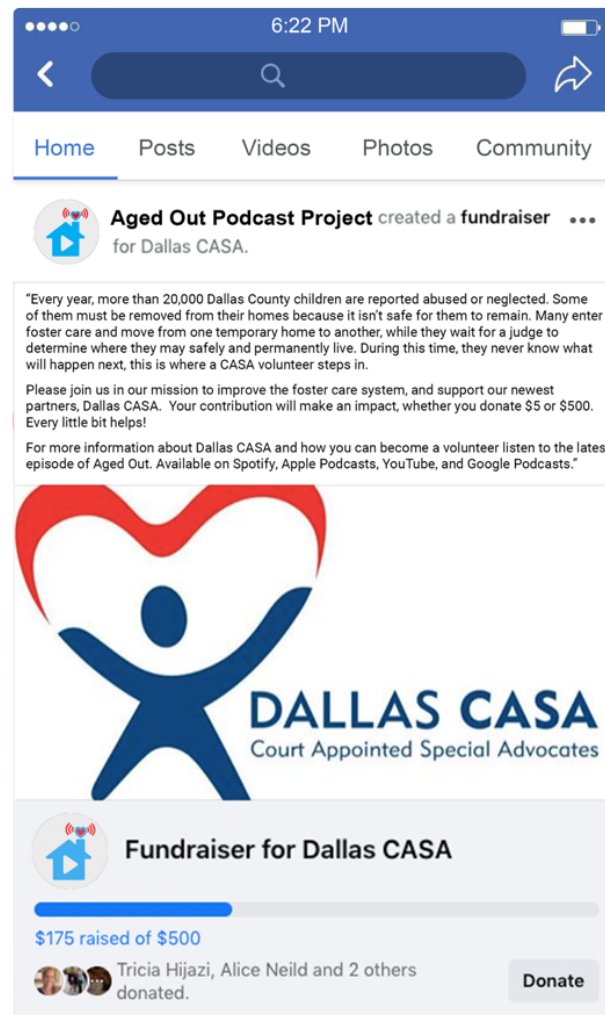
“On behalf of Aged Out, a podcast by the SMU Child Advocacy Clinic, Sabrina Chudnow and I are raising money for Dallas CASA. As a part of our graduate studies in advertising at SMU, we have been working on a marketing and rebranding strategy for the podcast in an effort to raise awareness and increase their listeners. A key component of our strategy involves partnering with other local nonprofits. We hope this fundraiser will not only benefit Dallas CASA but also initiate a conversation between the organizations. Your contribution will make an impact, whether you donate \$5 or \$500. Every little bit helps. Thank you for your support!”

Aged Out should begin their own Fundraiser description with an attention-grabbing stat, and should invite people to not only support CASA but also listen to the latest Aged Out podcast in order to learn more, like the example below:

“Every year, more than 20,000 Dallas County children are reported abused or neglected. Some of them must be removed from their homes because it isn’t safe for them to remain. Many enter foster care and move from one temporary home to another, while they wait for a judge to determine where they may safely and permanently live. During this time, they never know what will happen next, this is where a CASA volunteer steps in.

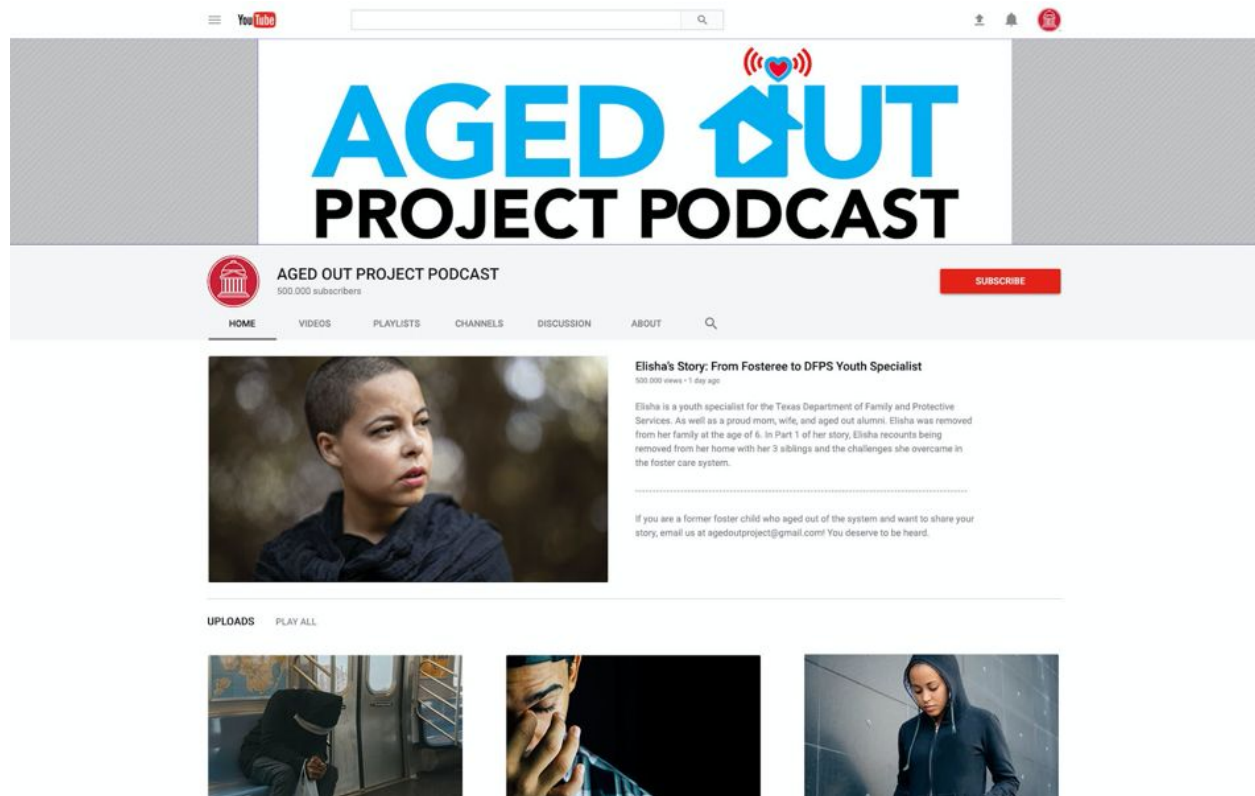
Please join us in our mission to improve the foster care system, and support our newest partners, Dallas CASA. Your contribution will make an impact, whether you donate \$5 or \$500. Every little bit helps!

For more information about Dallas CASA and how you can become a volunteer listen to the latest episode of Aged Out. Available on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), YouTube, and Google Podcasts.”



YOUTUBE

Creating a YouTube Channel will increase Aged Out's digital footprint and the likelihood of new listeners finding it. Videos can easily be converted to audio and should be accompanied by images that relate to the specific episode. If guests are uncomfortable having an image of themselves used, using a stock image of a somber younger male or female is a great alternative. Both the episode title and description should be informative and interesting, so it appears in people's search results and entices them to watch, without giving too much away.



TWITTER

Twitter is an excellent platform for sharing ideas of few words. Below is an example of how Aged Out could share their podcast link to their followers when new episodes come out. Similarly to our episode naming strategies, we suggest including a little tease into what the listener can hear by clicking on that link.



PRINT STRATEGIES

POSTER

We have briefly mentioned the possibility of partnering with ‘La La Land Kind Café’ in Dallas. One idea we have to create a partnership between the two entities includes a micro-campaign called **Lemonade**. We suggest offering their employees the opportunity to volunteer and share their stories through the Aged Out podcast in a special series called Lemonade, based off of the phrase “when life gives you lemons, you make lemonade”. This proverbial phrase suits La La Land’s signature color which is sunny yellow. Furthermore, they serve lemonade within their café, and their attitude is towards kindness and spreading positivity. If they display the poster in their café, it will potentially increase the listening audience, as the people who frequent La La Land are more likely to support the Aged Out cause. The art within this poster is hand drawn by us, so it can be distributed without worry of copyright infringement.



Aged Out:
The Stories That Built Us

Present

Lemonade

On Spotify and Apple Podcasts

@AgedOutProject

Hear Our Stories



T-SHIRTS

Promotional products turn listeners of the podcast into brand evangelists. Branded apparel has social currency for enthusiastic listeners who want to publicize their personal passions to others; Listeners who believe in Aged Out's mission will likely want to wear an Aged Out t-shirt and promote it to others who see them wearing it. As we recommended the students working on the podcast and guests on the podcast, should all be given branded t-shirts. The shirt designs must incorporate the Podcast title, logo, and colors. Additional elements such as the tagline "You Deserve to be Heard" or a link to the Facebook page can also be used, as in the examples below.

The t-shirts can also be sold on campus and online. Proceeds can be used for continued marketing efforts but we recommend donating a portion to a foster-related cause, so listeners feel especially good about how they are spending their money.





CONCLUSION

The comprehensive rebranding and promotional plan we propose will help Aged Out raise awareness of their podcast and increase its listening audience. Their episode content is personal, emotional, and engaging, but this is not reflected in their visual branding. Our suggested improvements, including the simple, instantly recognizable logos we designed and new podcast titles, will more effectively convey Aged Out's brand ideal, especially to people outside of the industry. Likewise, selecting more attention-grabbing and informative episode titles and imagery will clarify their subject matter and increase the likelihood people will want to click and listen.

Our promotional strategies focus on word-of-mouth marketing via increased social media efforts, branded apparel, and local partnerships in addition to leveraging their large network of SMU students, alumni, faculty, and industry connections to overcome their limited staff and frequent turnover.

Aged Out's mission is to empower former foster children by having their voices heard, but they currently lack the call to action necessary to have a real impact and bring about change. Our suggested industry partnerships with Dallas CASA and La La Land Cafe will not only allow them to reach new complementary audiences both on and offline but will also provide their listener's ways to turn their compassion into action.

By uploading the episodes to Youtube and Google Podcasts in addition to their current platforms, Aged Out can increase their digital footprint. This makes it easier for new listeners to find the podcast in search results. Furthermore, consistently providing interesting and useful content across Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter will keep current listeners engaged between the release of new episodes. Using a variety of methods such as recycling older episodes and sharing foster-care related news and volunteer opportunities with their followers will enable Aged Out to do so without having to create more original content and in the process establish themselves valuable resources beyond the podcast itself.

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APPENDIX-A

SURVEY

Start of Block:

Dear Participant,

This research study is part of a class project on gaining insight to better understand the best course of action for the W.W. Caruth Jr. Child Advocacy Clinic's podcast **"Aged Out: The Stories That Built Us."** We are in need of participants and are requesting your participation for this brief online survey, which will involve answering a series of short questions related to passions, social media usage, and podcasts. By Participating in this survey you have the opportunity to win a \$10 Spotify gift card!

The total time taken to complete this survey is approximately 10 minutes. Your participation in this study is voluntary but your honest opinions will be greatly valued. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits and you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. No foreseeable risks or discomforts will be experienced during the course or on completion of the survey. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by law and the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties but your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet. The results of the research study may be published, but data will be analyzed in the aggregate so no personal information will be used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the principal researchers, Sabrina Chudnow at schudnow@smu.edu or Stephanie Hijazi at shijazi@smu.edu.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Sabrina and Stephanie

Page Break

Q2 Which cause are you most interested in?

- ☐ Religion (Missionary work, religious based volunteering, etc.) (1)
- ☐ Education (schools, universities, scholarship funds, etc.) (2)
- ☐ Human services (food banks, shelters, etc.) (3)
- ☐ Health (disease research, treatment, etc.) (4)
- ☐ Arts, Culture, Humanities (museums, arts education programs, etc.) (5)
- ☐ Animals (humane societies, animal welfare, conservation, etc.) (6)
- ☐ Environment (global warming, disaster relief, etc.) (7)

Q3 How many hours did you volunteer in the last 12 months?

- ☐ 0-5 (1)
- ☐ 6-10 (2)
- ☐ 11-20 (3)
- ☐ 21-50 (4)
- ☐ 51-100 (5)
- ☐ 101+ (6)

Q4 Are there any local causes and organizations that you care about or are currently involved in?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Q4 = Yes

Q5 If Yes, please mention the cause and organization.

Display This Question:

If Q4 = Yes

Q6 In a few words, please explain what prompts you to volunteer/donate?

Page Break

Q7 Do you listen to podcasts?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Q7 = Yes

Q8 What platform do you listen to podcasts on? (choose all that apply)

- ☐ iTunes (1)
- ☐ Spotify (2)
- ☐ Google Podcasts (3)
- ☐ YouTube (4)
- ☐ Stitcher (5)
- ☐ TuneIn (6)
- ☐ Soundcloud (7)
- ☐ Facebook (8)
- ☐ Other: (9) -----

Display This Question:

If Q7 = Yes

Q9 Which genre of podcast do you actively listen to? (choose all that apply)

- ☐ Educational (1)
- ☐ True Crime (2)

- ☐ Comedy (3)
- ☐ Society and Culture (4)
- ☐ Stories (5)
- ☐ News and Politics (6)
- ☐ Arts and Entertainment (7)
- ☐ Sports and Recreation (8)
- ☐ Health and Lifestyle (9)
- ☐ Games (10)
- ☐ Business and Technology (11)
- ☐ Kids and Family (12)
- ☐ Fiction (13)
- ☐ Religion and Spirituality (14)
- ☐ Other: (15) _____

Display This Question:

If Q7 = Yes

Q10 What is important to you when selecting a podcast to listen to?

- ☐ Podcast's Title (1)
- ☐ Podcast's Visuals (image, logo, etc.) (2)
- ☐ Podcast's Length (3)

Display This Question:

If Q7 = Yes

Q11 Please provide the name of your favorite podcast.

Display This Question:

If Q7 = Yes

Q12 How do you learn about new episodes of the podcasts you listen to?

- ☐ Podcasts are released on a consistent schedule (i.e., every Tuesday) (1)
- ☐ Email newsletters (2)

- Social media announcements (3)
- Via the podcast platforms (i.e., follow / subscribe on Spotify or iTunes) (4)
- Other (5) _____

Display This Question:

If Q7 = Yes

Q13 On average, how long would you prefer your podcast to be?

- Less than 15 minutes (1)
- 16 to 30 minutes (2)
- 31 minutes to 1 hour (3)
- 1 hour to 2 hours (4)
- 2+ hours (5)

Display This Question:

If Q7 = Yes

Q14 Why do you continue listening to a podcast?

- New topics / stories in every episode (1)
- Continuation of topics / stories in following episodes (2)
- Variety of guest speakers offering different perspectives (3)
- The ability to contribute to the podcast (i.e., suggesting topics, responding/commenting to episodes, Q&A session, etc.) (4)
- Other: (5) _____

Page Break

Q15 Which social media platforms do you typically use? (choose all that apply)

- Facebook (1)
- Instagram (2)
- Twitter (3)
- Snapchat (4)
- Tumblr (5)
- LinkedIn (6)
- Pinterest (7)
- Other: (8) _____
- I do not use social media (9)

Display This Question:

If Q15 != I do not use social media

Q16 How often do you engage in the following social media activities (1 (infrequently) to 5 (frequently)):

	1	2	3	4	5
Entertainment (e.g., watching movies, listening to music, playing games, etc.) ()					
Socializing (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) ()					
Information-seeking (e.g., news, Google directions, travel tips, educational purposes, jobs and career, etc.) ()					
Communication (e.g., sending e-mails, blogging, etc.) ()					
Shopping (e.g., amazon, eBay, kayak, priceline, etc.) ()					
Philanthropy (e.g., volunteering, making donations, etc.) ()					

Display This Question:

If Q15 != I do not use social media

Q17 To what extent do you agree with this statement?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)

I often share content on social media (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Display This Question:

If Q15 != I do not use social media

Q18 What prompts you to share something on your social media profile?

- ☐ To bring valuable and entertaining content to others (1)
- ☐ To define ourselves to others (2)
- ☐ To grow and nourish relationships (3)
- ☐ For self-fulfillment (4)
- ☐ To market causes or brands (5)
- ☐ Incentives (i.e., contests, giveaways, or other free prizes) (6)
- ☐ Other (7) _____

Display This Question:

If Q15 != I do not use social media

Q19 Irrespective of the content, please explain, in a few words, what would **incentivize** you to share something on your social media platform?

Page Break

Q20 Please specify your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
--	--------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------	--------------------

I know a lot about the Texas Foster Care system (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the issues youth are facing upon leaving the Texas foster care system (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Q21 Have you ever listened to the podcast “Aged Out: The Stories that Built Us” by the W.W. Caruth, Jr. Child Advocacy Clinic at SMU?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Q21 = No

Q22 If no, this is the mission statement of “Aged Out: The Stories that Built Us”:

To empower former foster children by having their voices heard, using their stories to educate the public, and creating a forum for their perspectives on how to improve the foster care system.

Display This Question:

If Q21 = No

Q23 Based on reading the mission statement, would you be interested to listen to the podcast? After making a selection, in a few words, please explain 'why.'

- ☐ Yes (1) _____
- ☐ Maybe (2) _____
- ☐ No (3) _____

Q24 In the context of the Texas foster system and Aged Out, which guest speaker's perspective would you be most interested to listen to? (1 being least interested, 5 being most interested).

For each option, move the slider to denote your level of interest.

	1	2	3	4	5
Foster Kids ()					
Lawyers ()					
Social Workers ()					
Other: ()					

Page Break

Q25



Q26 Do you feel like the image above represents the podcast?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Q26 = No

Q27 If not, what image would better represent the concept of “Aged Out”?

Q28 What colors do you associate with Aged Out? (rank 1 to 3, 1 being strongest association)

- Red (1)
- Orange (2)
- Yellow (3)
- Green (4)
- Blue (5)
- Purple (6)
- Black (7)
- Brown (8)
- White (9)
- Other (10)

Page Break

Q29 **Please provide your demographic information below:**

Q30 Age:

- ☐ Under 18 (1)
- ☐ 18-24 (2)
- ☐ 25-34 (3)
- ☐ 35-44 (4)
- ☐ 45-54 (5)
- ☐ Over 55 (6)

- Prefer not to say (7)

Q31 Gender:

- Male (1)
 - Female (2)
 - Non Binary (3)
 - Other (please specify) (4)
-

- Prefer not to say (5)

Q32 Ethnicity:

- White (1)
- Hispanic or Latino (2)
- Black or African American (3)
- Native American (4)
- Middle Eastern or North African (5)
- Asian or Pacific Islander (6)
- Other (7)

Q33 What is the highest degree or level of schooling you have completed?

- Some high school (1)
 - High school degree or GED (2)
 - Bachelor's degree (3)
 - Master's degree (4)
 - Doctorate (5)
 - Other (please specify) (6)
-

Q34 What is your designation?

- Student (1)
- Faculty (2)
- Staff (3)
- Alumni (4)
- Other (5) _____

Page Break

This concludes the online survey. Please click 'next' to complete and record your responses. We sincerely thank you for your participation!

End of Block

APPENDIX-B

Aged Out Imagery Suggestions:

PHOTO INFORMATION

Man Pinching Nose Close-up Photo

Pixabay - Pexels

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/adult-dark-depressed-face-262218/>

Uploaded at 20, 2016

Lens	50.0mm f/5.6 1/40s
Size	2.99 MB
Resolution	4000px x 6000px
Camera	ILCE-6000
Taken At	July 23, 2015 12:36 am
Aspect Ratio	2:3

PHOTO INFORMATION

A man wearing black outfit

Davon Michel

Pexels

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/man-in-black-puffer-jacket-and-headphones-standing-near-black-post-lamp-3642727/>

Uploaded at January 29, 2020

Lens	50.0mm f/3.2 0.005s ISO 200
Size	2.21 MB
Resolution	3456px x 5184px
Camera	Canon EOS 60D
Software	Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 6.14 (Macintosh)

Taken At	January 17, 2020 5:57 pm
Aspect Ratio	2:3

PHOTO INFORMATION

Man in Black Shirt and Gray Denim Pants Sitting on Gray Padded Bench
Inzmam Khan

Pexels

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/man-in-black-shirt-and-gray-denim-pants-sitting-on-gray-padded-bench-1134204/>

Uploaded at June 03, 2018

Lens	28.0mm f/4.2 ISO 200
Size	14.6 MB
Resolution	5600px x 3856px
Camera	NIKON D5300
Software	Adobe Photoshop CC (Windows)
Taken At	March 05, 2017 1:49 pm
Aspect Ratio	350:241

PHOTO INFORMATION

Person in Black Hoodie Sitting on Train Bench
Steven Arenas

Pexels

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/person-in-black-hoodie-sitting-on-train-bench-362948/>

Uploaded at March 26, 2017

Lens	30.0mm f/5.0 1/200s ISO 400
Size	14.3 MB
Resolution	6000px x 4000px
Camera	ILCE-6000

Software	Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 6.9 (Windows)
Taken At	March 25, 2017 4:02 pm
Aspect Ratio	3:2

PHOTO INFORMATION

Woman in Gray Top and Shaved Head Looking Away**Engin Akyurt**

Pexels

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/woman-in-gray-top-and-shaved-head-looking-away-3209187/>

Uploaded at November 11, 2019

Lens	85.0mm f/1.2 ISO 200
Size	12.7 MB
Resolution	6720px x 4480px
Camera	Canon EOS R
Software	Adobe Photoshop Camera Raw 12.0 (Macintosh)
Taken At	November 07, 2019 3:41 pm
Aspect Ratio	3:2