

Reviewer responses for: “I want to be a part of something that helps youth like me.” [Title change: Young Adult Perspectives on Suicide: A Critical, Participatory, Just Practice approach to understanding suicide thoughts and decisions among young adults.”]

<u>Review-1</u> The Title of the Article should be at the beginning of the Abstract along with the author.	Yes, this was removed when we de-identified the paper. It will be included again.
The abstract should have some form of introduction to lead into the abstract.	Agreed, we have added depth, specificity and clarity to the abstract (p. 2), as well as an introductory statement.
The method of research and participants should be clarified. The results should be given with results being the beginning of the findings.	Agreed, we have clarified the methods throughout. In the Results section, we have provided more detailed results before moving into findings/discussion.
Finally, the last sentence could be clearer in a format such as: The findings of this study are consistent with the just practice framework of justice-oriented social work practice and support more exploratory and qualitative research in the field of suicide prevention among young adults.	This is a strong suggestion. Edited/added on p. 32
<u>Review-2</u> The manuscript addresses an important and underexamined area by foregrounding young adults’ first-person experiences with suicidal thoughts and attempting to situate these experiences within a Just Practice framework and Critical Suicidology. Centering youth voices and moving beyond purely clinical or individually oriented models toward relational, institutional, and structural contexts is timely and relevant for the field. However, while the topic and analytical orientation have clear potential significance, the manuscript currently does not fully realize this contribution due to conceptual, methodological, and analytic gaps. With substantial revision, the study could offer a	Thank you for this feedback and for your clear understanding of the goals and intent of this work. We look forward to this opportunity for revision.

meaningful addition to justice-oriented suicide research and inform researchers, practitioners, and policymakers seeking alternatives to risk-factor-focused paradigms.	
The title is clear, however it is not “search engine-friendly”. I would recommend something akin to: “Young Adult Perspectives on Suicide Ambivalence: A Just Practice and Critical Suicidology Analysis Using Participatory Methods”	Important point! Made edits and additions. “Young Adult perspectives on Suicide: A critical, participatory, Just Practice approach to suicide thoughts and help-seeking.” (p.1)
The abstract is generally clear, but it lacks specificity about methodology; it does not explicitly state sample size and number of focus groups, as well as the analytic approach (content analysis). Also, there should be clear articulation of the three major themes to offer readers a concise preview of findings (context, ambivalence, and factors connecting to life). Lastly, they should incorporate a stronger concluding sentence that links the findings back to the need for structural, justice-oriented suicide prevention strategies.	Yes—such a strong and do-able suggestion. Thank you. Changes made reflect these suggestions. (p.2)
The references are somewhat current and relevant, and they reflect some engagement with established suicidology alongside critical and social justice-oriented scholarship. However, the literature base is not sufficiently robust or well aligned with the manuscript’s stated aims and analytic orientation. In particular, the manuscript would benefit from stronger engagement with foundational and contemporary youth suicide literature to more clearly situate the study within existing theoretical and methodological debates and to clarify what, specifically, this study adds to the field. In addition, the reference list should be expanded to include scholarship on resilience, power dynamics and ethical considerations in focus group research with	Important considerations. Our literature review has been expanded to include more focus on 1) youth suicide literature (p. 5); 2) methodological considerations (with regards to PAR and also focus groups) with regards to working with people with lived experience (p. 8-9); and 3) critical/structural critiques including institutional betrayal and trauma and carceral suicide interventions (pg. 5-6).

participants who have histories of trauma or suicidality. Greater engagement with literature on institutional betrayal, psychiatric coercion, and harms associated with involuntary or carceral suicide interventions would substantially strengthen the manuscript's structural analysis. Finally, references on participatory action research with suicidal or otherwise marginalized youth populations, including ethical, methodological, and analytic applications of PAR, are needed to justify the study's methodological choices and to support the claims made about participatory contributions and implications.	
The manuscript is meaningful. However, revisions should justify and problematize the theoretical and conceptual framework, the use of focus groups and PAR; strengthen the abstract; analyze results instead of report; clarify methodological safeguards and limitations; and enhance theoretical integration and implications in the discussion	Thank you—we largely agree with this assessment. Throughout this revision we have focused on detailing and justifying the methods and framework, deepening/clarifying the analysis, and strengthening the implications.
Specific Comments: The manuscript has several notable strengths. It centers young adults' lived experiences with suicidality, engages justice-oriented frameworks such as Just Practice and Critical Suicidology, and addresses an important gap in suicide research that often privileges clinical or risk-factor-driven approaches. The topic is timely and relevant, and the authors demonstrate a clear commitment to centering youth voices and social context. That said, the Introduction would benefit from greater conceptual clarity and focus. Key constructs, including the Just Practice framework, need to be clearly defined rather than assumed. The introduction currently	Thank you. We have strengthened the introduction, providing more details about the guiding research question and explicit explanations of the theoretical and methodological frameworks we are implementing (p. 3-5)

provides a broad overview of suicide-related topics but does not sufficiently specify the study's research question, nor does it clearly articulate why this particular framing is necessary or what is missing from existing literature. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is referenced but not defined, and no concrete examples are given of how PAR has been used in prior suicide research. The section would be strengthened by more targeted citation of youth suicide literature and clearer articulation of which theories and methods the authors are drawing on and why.	
Similarly, the Background section lacks sufficient and focused citation and does not consistently link the reviewed material back to the study's specific research question. The manuscript needs to more clearly identify the gap it aims to fill and explain why that gap is important for the field. While the content is generally relevant, several paragraphs are dense and could be streamlined to better foreground the central claims and their relevance to the study's purpose.	Thank you. We have drafted a more streamlined and connected background section that focuses on the context we are exploring in the study (p. 5-7).
The Methods section provides a clear description of recruitment, prescreening, and data collection procedures, which is a strength. However, the manuscript needs to more explicitly state and justify inclusion and exclusion criteria. The sample is heavily LGBTQ, yet this is neither discussed nor made analytically relevant in relation to suicide research or the study's methodological choices. PAR is named but not meaningfully discussed; the author should explain how PAR informed the design, data collection, analysis, and implications of the study,	Thank you. Greater clarity has been added in which we: Describe PAR process of research design, implementation and analysis (p. 8-10) *Add details in the Methods about prescreening (p. 10-11) and exclusion criteria.

including concrete examples of how the advisory board was involved.	
In addition, the manuscript should explicitly address the limitations inherent in using focus groups for highly sensitive topics such as suicidality. Focus groups can reproduce harmful power dynamics, inhibit disclosure, and privilege dominant voices, particularly given participants' trauma histories, experiences of suicidality, and marginalized identities. The author should explain why focus groups were selected over individual interviews, how facilitators monitored and mitigated power dynamics, whether any participants demonstrated distress and how it was addressed, and whether the virtual format altered power relations, safety, or group hierarchies. The manuscript also needs greater detail regarding how mental health diagnoses were measured, how questions were used, and how participant protection was ensured. Further, the rationale for using content analysis is not clearly articulated or cited. The analytic process, specifically how themes were generated (how many team members involved?), refined, and interpreted including how youth were involved. Authors mention using content analysis but also themes? More clarity about form of qualitative analysis used is needed.	Great and important question/comments. A discussion of limitations has been added and talks explicitly about both focus groups and PAR methods (p. 29-31). A great deal more detail has been added to the data analysis section describing development of themes and findings (p. 12-14). Clarified: thematic, not content analysis (p. 13)
In the Results, a central conceptual issue is the unclear separation between intrapersonal, interpersonal, and broader systemic or structural levels of context. Although the manuscript states an intention to avoid individualizing suicidality, several subsections unintentionally fold structural or relational phenomena into the	Powerful clarification/suggestion. While thinking through this feedback, we identified a serious need to reorganize the thematic analysis to more clearly differentiate our focus on theoretical alignment with Critical Suicidology and Just Practice frameworks, to prevent unintended

“intrapersonal” domain. For example, experiences such as social media exposure, institutional betrayal, police responses, family religious norms, and cultural stigma are characterized as intrapersonal despite being interpersonal, institutional, or sociocultural forces. Trauma histories involving abuse, domestic violence, or abandonment are treated as interpersonal, yet they are also shaped by family systems, service system failures, and structural inequalities. At the same time, some genuinely intrapersonal factors (such as self-concept or mood states) are not consistently distinguished from relational dynamics. This blending of levels blurs analytic precision and risks re-individualizing what the manuscript seeks to frame as contextual and structural. Reorganizing themes/categories to more clearly distinguish intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, and sociocultural or structural levels would strengthen theoretical alignment with Critical Suicidology and the Just Practice framework, prevent unintended individualization, and improve coherence.	individualization of the issue, and to improve overall coherence. Results are not presented through the Just Practice/Critical Suicidology frameworks, and the relational, contextual, structure nature of the findings are reiterated throughout the discussion and conclusion.
The Discussion demonstrates some engagement with theory, particularly Just Practice, but it would benefit from deeper analytic development. Specifically, the authors could more critically interrogate the role of institutional betrayal and examine how prior harmful help-seeking experiences shape both suicidality and participation in research. Greater engagement with contemporary debates in Critical Suicidology, particularly regarding the ethics and limitations of focus groups with suicidal populations, would strengthen the discussion. Additionally, the manuscript gives limited attention to resilience or youth strengths despite rich data that could	Agreed. We have added greater engagement with the theories and mechanisms we are discussing. We appreciate that greater attention to resilience or youth could contribute meaningfully to that literature—we have foregrounded some of this in our findings and discussion.

contribute meaningfully to that literature; with reorganization, the study has the potential to make a more substantial contribution in this area.	
Across the Results and Discussion, the analysis tends to describe rather than interpret. While the manuscript identifies intrapersonal and interpersonal contributors to suicidality, it does not fully interrogate how these levels interact or why certain patterns matter for theory-building within Critical Suicidology and Just Practice. For example, participants' accounts of institutional betrayal, police responses, involuntary hospitalization, dismissive therapists, are presented largely as individual experiences, yet they point to a broader pattern in which "care" operates through surveillance, coercion, and trauma. The discussion also does not fully engage the tension in Theme 3: participants describe wanting to live when embedded in community, but the manuscript stops short of linking this to broader scholarship on belonging, racialized vulnerability, or the ways systems fracture community ties.	Throughout the results and discussion we have made efforts to make connections and more deeply interrogate the findings within the Just Practice and Critical Suicidology frameworks. Your points about care as surveillance, coercion and trauma are so powerful and important. We have added these interrogations into the discussion (p. 27). We agree that the manuscript stops short of linking this to broader scholarship on belonging, racialized vulnerability, or the ways systems fracture community ties. There is much additional work to do on a truly intersectional analysis of suicide thoughts and experiences. Please see our recommendations for future work (p. 31).
More broadly, while the Just Practice framework is invoked, it is largely applied after the fact rather than used to drive a deeper critique. The findings suggest that young adults' suicidality is shaped not only by context, but by structural abandonment, family systems that suppress emotion, cultures and religions that stigmatize identity, institutions that punish distress, and digital environments that algorithmically target trauma. Yet the discussion does not fully articulate these as patterned forms of power, nor does it examine how they produce the ambivalence	Thank you for this important point. We have have taken a great deal of time on this revision to apply the Just Practice/Critical Suicidology frameworks more clearly and methodically throughout this paper. Our results highlight context, structural harm, exposure to trauma, and influences of power and the ways these constructs contribute to risks or to protections from suicide among young adults. It is our hope that this revision demonstrates a deeper engagement with both theories and support a more significant contribution to the field.

participants describe. Questions such as what it means that young adults feel safer with peers than institutions, how institutional harm reshapes help-seeking, and where power and history operate in the emotional calculus of “wanting to die but also wanting care” remain underexplored. Addressing these questions would significantly enhance the manuscript’s analytic depth and theoretical contribution.	(See data analysis, results, discussion & conclusion for these substantive changes).
Finally, the Conclusion is concise and appropriate but could more explicitly reiterate how the findings challenge dominant clinical or risk-factor-focused paradigms and underscore the implications for justice-oriented suicide prevention and intervention.	Yes, thank you. In the conclusion we have reiterated the findings and underscored the implications (p. 31)
<u>Review-3</u> Should it be suicide thoughts or suicidal thoughts? I am not very familiar with the latest nomenclature.	Either is acceptable, but we lean towards suicide thoughts, as they are more encompassing of suicide behaviors rather than only implying ideation. We tried to be consistent throughout.
Abstract should include some details about the findings and recommendations.	Agreed/addressed.
“Older adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 24 had suicide rates of 15% in the United States (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2023).” Would this sentence refer to the rate of completed or attempted or thoughts of suicide? “In addition, the evolution of social media platforms and the widespread use of smartphones have heightened the vulnerability of young adults to these inequalities.” Please explain why they have heightened. “Consequently, an understanding of various risk factors, warning signs, and the underlying causes leading to suicide behaviors among young adults as perceived by researchers and practitioners	Address these questions in the intro.

have demonstrated insufficient in capturing the continuing causes behind suicidality or lowering young adults' suicide rates nationwide for the past decades." Please check the grammar here in this sentence and a diction problem too. In Methods, how is the research PAR? How is it participatory and action oriented? That part seems unclear. Given the subject matter, and its methodology, it is important I believe for the authors to provide a positionality statement. What was the impetus or motivation for them to conduct the study and write the paper? How are their identities and social locations relevant to the formulation of the research question and the interpretation of the findings?	
Re: the conclusion, "e.g., Deeper engagement with participatory action research and other qualitative methods that delve into the lived experiences of individuals coping with suicide thoughts from childhood to adulthood will strengthen prevention and intervention work (Alvarez et al., 2023; Alvarez et al., 2022)." It is necessary I believe to be more specific about how this engagement will strengthen prevention and intervention. What exactly about prevention? About intervention? It is too vague as stated. Also, the intersectional identities of the participants should be discussed and/or theorized in terms of its relation to the topic and the load of oppression on them which can spur sequelae of self-harm thoughts and suicidal thoughts. Esp. re: Queer identity and re: Afro-American identity. You may need to employ something like Black Feminist Thought or Queer theory or Chicano critical consciousness to guide your discussion. The results section is well written. Some very important content.	Yes. We have added to the conclusion how this engagement will strengthen prevention and intervention (p. 31) In particular, we have called for future research to address intersectional identities in relation to suicide thoughts/behaviors. We agree that critical theoretical approaches would be well-suited for this exploration.