

BACKGROUND

- Few studies have examined outcomes of youth in foster care by centering their voices and the voices of the professionals working with them day-to-day.
- **Primary Research Question:** How can child welfare and related professionals support young people in foster care toward positive experiences and outcomes?

METHODS

- Data was collected via *poetic inquiry*.⁴
- 7 poetry groups were held with 41 participants; 13 youth and 28 professionals (1 former foster parent and 1 parent with experience with the child welfare system)
- Participants created poetic responses to the research question and then co-constructed *relational poems*.⁵
- **Thematic analysis** was used to analyze individual and relational poems.

FINDINGS

- Four **global themes** were identified.

Relationship-building is central to supporting youth in foster care.

Remember this
We are all bound together by this complex thing called humanity
Remember this and eventually they becomes
We... “

“Did you give? "Give what" you say
Your empathy, Your patience, your time
and your attention
To let them know they matter “

Ideologies & views on **purpose** of child welfare systems are **complex, fragmented and in flux.**

“We all want what’s best for the child... who determines what best is?”

“We can give you an umbrella if it’s raining
That’s nothing if we
Never
Let you say
how it feels to be
Already drenched”

“Can you support me
if we don’t talk about the biggest part of me?
My family connections.”

Amplified: A Poetic Inquiry of Voices in Child Welfare

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Youths’ and professionals’ poems:

- Centered relationship-building
- Identified strong emotions among both youth & professionals
- Amplified the need for action of many types
- Uncovered the child welfare system’s purpose as complex, fragmented, and in-flux



QR Code leads to example relational poems created by participants . To hear audio, slides must be in presenter mode.



IMPLICATIONS

- **Structure organizations** to facilitate relationship-building and actions that directly **support and maximize youth self-determination and resilience**
- **Transform systems** to activate accountability and action steps that **create a family-centered, well-being system**

Experiences with the child welfare system **elicit emotional and affective responses** for both youth and professionals.

“Again placement disrupts
Disrupts, another way of saying I'm
not wanted
I'm not good enough, they can't
handle me, they give up on me”

“Trauma ripples out and touches everything.”

“I am here.
I have a voice.
I am powerful.”

Actions to support youth were identified frequently, varied greatly, and were prescriptive.

“Look within
Listen deeply
Listen with your heart
Deliver on your promises
Listen from your toes”

“Model what you want to grow in them.”

“See me.”

“Be there when it matters.”

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