

Reducing Inequality
for Systems Impacted
LGBTQ+ Youth:
Hearing the
Narratives Behind the
Numbers through
Participatory Research

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Disproportionate Representation and Poorer Outcomes

Rates of LGBTQ+ Identification

Foster Care -19-34% of youth

Juvenile Justice - 12-20% of youth

58% of girls in JJ facilities identify as LGBTQ+

In both systems, the majority of youth are of color

In both systems, high rates of sexual victimization and harassment both inside and outside of facilities (FC & JJ)

Disparate Treatment In Foster Care

- ◇ Twice as likely to be placed in congregate care (
- ◇ Experience more movements while in care than their cisgender and heterosexual peers
- ◇ More likely to report being treated poorly
- ◇ Mental health and substance abuse disparities
- ◇ Educational disparities
- ◇ Experience heightened barriers when they age-out of the system
- ◇ Foster care system often acts as a carceral pipeline to the juvenile justice system

(Baams et al, 2019; Irvine and Canfield, 2016; Mountz, 2020; Wilson et al, 2017 Fish et al; 2019; ; Shpiegel and Simmel, 2016, Wlson & Kastanis, et al, 2015; Wilson et al, 2017)

Movement Between Systems: The Revolving Door

Youth remain in constant flux as they are . . .

- ◆ shuttled between non-nurturing settings, and
- ◆ criminalized for their survival and community-building efforts

With the resulting trajectories . .

- ◆ Endangered health and wellness
- ◆ Foreclosed access to opportunity structures
- ◆ Ensnared in punitive systems
- ◆ Exposed to interpersonal and state violence
- ◆ Impaired transition to adulthood



LGBTQ+ Youth Organizing

Despite these structural barriers, there are youth who flourish and become leaders, community-based networks and community organizing initiatives through which youth access support and create kinship networks.

After all, these are the youth who were decades ago were the fire behind the Stonewall Rebellion that paved the way for some many of the liberties queer and trans folx now enjoy.



Research Justice: Systems Impacted LGBTQ+ Young People Need to be at the Table

In addition to collecting national SOGIE and intersectional data, we need to . . .

- ◆ Listen beyond the numbers to the nuanced narratives and create opportunities for counter-storytelling
- ◆ Counter adultism, redistribute power, and honor the knowledge producing and organizing capacity of young people through participatory and action-oriented research

From Our Perspectives: Untold stories of LGBTQ youth in the Los Angeles Foster Care System

- ◆ Community based participatory research (CBPR)
- ◆ Photovoice methodology and qualitative interviewing,
- ◆ 25 LGBTQ identified former foster youth
- ◆ Community Advisory Board
- ◆ Curated community-based arts exhibit with 500 attendees

Paper Trail

“I took the photo to describe how I was pretty much a case and I had a long paper trail attached to me so whenever I moved to group homes they weren’t necessarily looking at me as a character or person, they only looked at my paperwork so they never asked me what I thought I needed for my healing and process and me trying to get a home.”

--Gray (21-year-old Asian, queer identified male)





Community ART EXHIBIT: ArtShare L.A. GALLERY



Community ART EXHIBIT: ArtShare L.A. GALLERY



Community ART EXHIBIT: CSUN Art Gallery



Listening to Nuanced Narratives: Entry into Care

(Mountz and Capous-Desyllas, 2020)

Family rejection was seldom the reason for initial placement in foster care, but rejection by both family of origin and foster parents, and mistreatment by peers, caregivers, and workers presented as a barrier to permanency

When asked why their understanding of why they initially entered the foster care young people most frequently referenced parental substance abuse or mental health issues, poverty, and racism.

Participants spent significantly more time talking about the harms that they experienced as a result of being in foster care, then they did about harm or mistreatment within their families of origin that contributed to their placement.

This data indicates that we need were need to avoid settling into a single narrative of family rejection as a reason for LGBTQ youth's disproportionate representation in care, and expand our understanding to look at the roles of systemic racism and state surveillance and the harms perpetrated by the "child protective" system itself

Listening to Nuanced Narratives: Experiences of Transgender and Gender Expansive Youth

(Mountz, Capous-Desyllas, & Pourciau,
2018)

Increased placement disruption as compared to LGB youth (approximately twice as many placements)

Profound lack of worker and caregiver competency

Barriers to accessing gender-affirming medical care that had a profoundly negative mental health impact

Barriers to housing, education, and employment that contributed to engagement in the underground economy

Support from trans community networks and within trans specific services provided by LGBT Centers

“As an LGBT community, people tell us that we’re freaks, that we’re crazy but we’re going to do it anyway to be ourselves. And I love the strength that I see the trans people have within LGBTQ because we’re fighting to be ourselves.” – Teal

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