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“The internet is not private”: The role of social media in sexual health among youth in foster care

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1. Introduction

Nearly all (95%) of U.S. teens have access to a smartphone, and 89% of teens report being online on a near constant basis or several times per day (Pew Research Center, 2018). Social media use is on the rise (Lenhart et al., 2010) and ubiquitous among American teens: in 2018, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook were among the most popular platforms, with 85%, 72%, and 51%, respectively, of teens reporting their use (Pew Research Center, 2018). Unsurprisingly, online dating has increased among those under age 25 (Pew Research Center et al., 2016), and many youth, including foster youth, develop intimate and sexual relationships through social media (Henderson, 2011; Holloway et al., 2014; Rueda et al., 2019). A recent study of pregnant and parenting girls in foster care found they use social media both to meet new romantic partners and stay in contact with the fathers of their children (Rueda et al., 2019). Unfortunately, foster youth experience higher rates of sexual abuse, STIs, HIV, and unintended pregnancy compared to their general population peers (Ahrens et al., 2010; Dowdell et al., 2009; Dworsky & Courtney, 2010; McMillen et al., 2005; Shpiegel & Cascardi, 2015). Therefore, it is imperative that we understand how foster youth use social media to build and maintain intimate relationships and how this may protect or harm their sexual health, defined as a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality (World Health Organization, 2020).

1.1. Outcomes of social media use among youth

Social media use has both positive and negative youth outcomes. Positive outcomes include the potential for connecting with friends and family (Pew Research Center, 2018); reduced

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social anxiety and isolation (Best et al., 2014); and increased social capital, social and emotional support, self-esteem, social integration, and identity exploration and formation (Best et al., 2014). Compared to adults, youth may be more willing to disclose personal information, have emotionally empathic conversations, and establish close interpersonal relationships on social media (Best et al., 2014). Such openness can facilitate formation, development, and maintenance of intimate and romantic relationships (Howard et al., 2019; Stonard et al., 2014).

Negative youth behaviors and outcomes include cyberbullying (Pew Research Center, 2018), sexual coercion (Howard et al., 2019; Stonard et al., 2014), sexting (Boekeloo et al., 2018; Lucero et al., 2014; Stonard et al., 2014), sexual solicitation and harassment (Stonard et al., 2014; Valkenburg & Peter, 2011), monitoring and spying, controlling intimate relationship behaviors, verbal and emotional aggression, and rumor-spreading by intimate partners (Howard et al., 2019; Lucero et al., 2014; Stonard et al., 2014). Monitoring youths' interactions online is necessary as online and in-person intimate partner victimization are positively associated (Hellevik, 2019).

1.2. Appeal of social media use among foster youth

Because foster youths' behavior is often heavily monitored and regulated, social media communication may have a strong appeal by affording youth agency, autonomy, and control of their online relationships (Fitch, 2012; Gustavsson & MacEachron, 2015). Online communication may enable foster youth to maintain existing social capital and networks despite changes in foster care placement, communities, and schools (Fitch, 2012; Gustavsson & MacEachron, 2015). Some risks of social media use are particularly salient for foster youth, who may be especially vulnerable to negative online experiences due to histories of trauma and related impact on coping skills (Gustavsson & MacEachron, 2015; Hudson, 2012; Wolak et al., 2008), and change in their support structures as they prepare to age out of foster care (Bashook, 2005; Gustavsson & MacEachron, 2015).

1.3. Current study

Given the increased use of social media among teens, coupled with the potentially negative consequences of use and increased vulnerability of foster youth, this study seeks to explore how foster youth and foster care staff perceive social media use among foster youth with regard to their sexual and relationship health. This study is guided by the following research question: *How do foster youth and foster care staff perceive foster youths' use of social media to meet potential intimate partners and maintain sexual and romantic relationships?*

2. Method

We conducted five ($N=5$) focus groups total. First, we conducted three focus groups with 16 foster youth (10 boys and six girls), followed by two additional focus groups with 17 foster care staff (11 group home staff and supervisors and six social workers). This study involved a community-engaged approach: the need for studying foster youths' sexual health needs was initially raised by a longstanding community partner; subsequently, study design,

recruitment, and data collection tools were developed and conducted in partnership with a community-based foster care organization.

2.1. Sample

Youth participants were aged 16–20 ($M = 17.25$) years and staff participants were aged 25–53 ($M = 34.31$) years. Both youth ($n = 11$) and staff ($n = 11$) participants identified primarily as African American. The majority of youth ($n = 11$) and staff ($n = 16$) participants also identified as straight or heterosexual; one staff participant left this demographic question unanswered and therefore has an unknown sexual orientation. Further demographic information is provided in Table 1. Age of male staff is excluded to protect participants' confidentiality.

2.2. Data collection

We conducted the focus groups at our partnering community-based organization's primary office space and youths' group homes. Each youth focus group was co-facilitated by two co-authors who matched the participants in gender, and the focus groups with foster care staff were facilitated by a research team member with previous social work practice experience. During their focus groups, youth identified and discussed key areas of sexual and relationship health needs among foster youth (Kachingwe et al., 2019; Salerno et al., 2020). Youth identified these areas from an extensive list of sexual health topics developed by the research team. Once the top areas of need were identified, youth were then asked to discuss why each topic was selected, and how best their needs could be met. Separately, staff were then asked to discuss their experiences with addressing these needs among foster youth. Social media emerged as an important part of addressing sexual health among foster youth during all of the focus group discussions. Youth received a \$15 gift card to compensate them for their time. The focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

2.3. Ethical considerations

All study procedures were approved by the [university's] Institutional Review Board and partnering community-based organization administrators. The interview guide, demographic form, and recruitment strategies were co-developed by our team, composed of university- and community-based partners, to help ensure study feasibility, acceptability, and appropriateness. Data were coded by participant ID, and kept in locked cabinets and password-protected computers. Underaged participants indicated verbal interest in the study during recruitment sessions prior to our seeking and obtaining parental/guardian consent and written youth assent. Members of the research team worked closely with staff at the partnering community-based organization to identify the most appropriate adult from which to seek parental/guardian consent (e.g., county social worker or biological parent).

2.4. Data analysis

Data analysis followed a five-step thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During step one, our team's primary data analyst and manuscript first author read all five transcripts while listening to the corresponding audio recordings to identify preliminary patterns. To

ensure trustworthiness of findings, the analyst maintained a research journal with memos and co-authors wrote reflexive journal entries. During step two, the analyst generated initial codes, analyzing each transcript line-by-line and identifying features of the data at the lowest unit of analysis with relevance to the research question. In step three, the analyst reviewed initial codes with the entire research team and collaboratively identified how they were related, grouping codes by slightly broader, emergent themes. Emergent themes were subsequently grouped and ordered hierarchically, generating themes and sub-themes grounded directly in participants' perspectives. In step four, the analyst reviewed each theme to ensure coherence, and determined the validity of each theme by assessing whether it fit with and accurately represented the dataset as a whole. In step four, some themes were discarded because not enough data were present to support them, and themes with substantial overlap were merged. During step five, all co-authors examined each theme and, through discussion and consensus-building, came to an agreement on the clearest, more accurate way to present the findings. All analysis was conducted in NVivo 12 and reviewed at weekly team meetings throughout the analytic process. Further, the final themes and sub-themes were reviewed for accuracy by staff at the partnering community-based foster care organization.

3. Results

Analysis revealed four themes characterizing how foster youth and foster care staff perceive youths' use of social media to meet potential intimate partners and maintain sexual and romantic relationships (summarized in Table 2). Youth and staff discussed (1) the role of trust when using social media to build intimate relationships; (2) reasons why social media is perceived as unsafe; (3) methods youth use to protect themselves by setting boundaries during online interactions; and (4) generational differences in social media use. Each theme has several related subthemes.

3.1. Theme one: Trust

Youth and staff highlighted the importance of trust as a key building block in relationship development during social media use. Participants described how social media can both hinder one's willingness to trust and be used as a mechanism through which to build trust. Foster youth specifically expressed a hesitancy to trust others online, whereas foster staff described youth as being "too trusting" when using social media.

Subtheme 1: Determining an appropriate level of trust.—When using social media to build intimate relationships, both youth and staff discussed the need for youth to be cautious when interacting with others online. Youth considered trustworthiness online as something that should be earned, because, as they described, you "*never know somebody's past*" and there are "*millions of creeps in the world.*" Youth described being judicious with who they trust online as a necessary protective mechanism. As one girl in foster care shared, "*half of the people [here, in the focus group] believe that you can't trust anybody [online],*" suggesting that even with time, trust may never truly be earned. Despite youths' expressed hesitancy towards trusting others online, staff expressed a different perception, namely that youth demonstrate blind trust of their partner when in a relationship, particularly

during “*that very enmeshed infatuation stage of a relationship.*” This leads to “*an inability to understand that this person might hurt you later,*” so youth send revealing or explicit photos to their intimate partners without first considering “*if I send this, like, it’s there forever. This person that I think I trust now - and who I might get into a fight with in six months - could use this stuff [against me].*” Whereas all participants stressed the importance of trust, youth and staff perceived its role in building youths’ online relationships differently.

Subtheme 2: Foster youth intentionally build trust.—When in a relationship, youth discussed how one’s actions on social media can be used to gain their partner’s trust. Unlike during in-person communication, social media more directly allows foster youth to monitor who their partners are interacting with and vice versa: As one boy in foster care explained, “*[if] your girl go to check your phone, [and] you got a list of females in there, [it leads to] trust issues. You gotta cut some females off, you gotta be loyal to her [your partner].*” Whereas youth found it difficult to gain their partner’s trust, they identified constrained social media use as one mechanism to gain this trust. Boys in foster care valued cutting off their female contacts, albeit begrudgingly, because they felt it would please their partners. Staff did not share their perspectives on how youth use social media to gain and maintain their partners’ trust, indicating their limited understanding of youths’ social media use.

3.2. Theme two: Safety

Foster youth and staff discussed how social media use can be unsafe when used to build and maintain intimate relationships. The lack of perceived safety is connected to negative consequences that transfer to offline experiences, such as intimate partner violence.

Subtheme 1: Deception.—Foster youth perceived building intimate relationships through social media as unsafe due to the impending threat of being “*catfished.*” Catfishing is the act of creating a fictional online persona with the intent to lure other online users into a relationship (Slade et al., 2014). As one girl in foster care shared “*don’t ever meet somebody off the internet if you’ve never met them before. I feel like we’ve all been [catfished before].*” Another participant described a situation where she and an Instagram user flirted with one another by liking several of each other’s photos. However, the other Instagram user soon started “*arguing with [me] for no reason over nothing,*” and when the foster youth called her repeatedly, she “*never picked up, and [the] one time she picked up, she sounded like a man.*” Other youth present in the focus group agreed that she had been catfished. These kinds of interactions make foster youth hesitant when meeting people on social media because, as stated by one youth, “*you never know, you could be talking to a world class hacker.*” Although staff did not discuss catfishing, they did express concern more generally about the need for youth to be cautious of others’ intentions when sharing explicit photos online.

Subtheme 2: Access to older men.—Participants shared that social media provides an avenue through which youth, particularly girls, are able to cultivate intimate relationships with men who are significantly older than them. As shared by one of the boys, “*[girls in foster care] want to talk [to] twenty-five, twenty-six [year-old men] on social media*” and “*they want to brag about [how] they going [around] with grown men.*” He explained that

girls in foster care do this in order to have a “*sugar dad*,” who could give them money and buy them things. The boys expressed concern over these relationships by highlighting that the grown men could potentially harm the girls via sexually violent acts, such as rape. Interestingly, the girls did not discuss access to older men on social media other than one participant stating “*don’t go on no dating app. Just because you 18 don’t mean you grown.*” Staff also did not discuss youths’ access to older men through social media, but shared that youth do not “*get enough modeling of positive relationships,*” causing unhealthy relationships, both online and offline, to be normalized. Such normalization indicates why accessing older men might not have been discussed by the girls in the focus group themselves.

Subtheme 3: Lack of privacy.—Foster youth and staff also viewed social media use as unsafe due to the users’ inability to maintain privacy. For foster youth in particular, maintaining privacy is paramount because peers in their social network may not be aware that they are in foster care. Youth agreed that “*the internet is not private*” and feared that while using social media, people would be able to gather key information about them such as their social security number, password, and IP address. Further, many platforms enable youth to see who their partner is interacting with on social media, and vice versa. This was believed to put one at an increased risk of intimate partner violence because it illuminates and escalates “*trust issues.*” For example, as one male youth shared, if a foster youth’s partner sees that they have a lot of “*females*” on their social media page, their partner might become violent by “*grab[bing] a wand curler and throw[ing] it at your face, leav[ing] a mark.*” These acts of violence are especially concerning because, as one staff highlighted, “*a lot of times, you know, if [youth have] been hit or sexually abused, whatever it is, they’ll kind of make excuses and say this was the first time, or they’re fantastic apologetic.*”

Youth and staff also discussed the need for youth to censor what information is purposefully shared with intimate partners, as social media easily allows for content to be widely disseminated. Boys in care noted that when “*somebody get your nudes, they’ll be on Instagram and it just gets to everything - Snapchat, World Star, YouTube.*” Youth expressed concern that those who are “*exposed*” (i.e., their nude photos sent to an intimate partner are then shared among many users via social media) are “*gon’ get made fun of and bullied - then they gon’ try to kill they self.*” Although foster youth expressed concern about such exposure, staff stated that foster youth “*think they can break the rules. Like they send [a nude] on Snapchat - so they’re like ‘oh, if I just send it in Snapchat, it’ll go away,’ - [without realizing] sometimes [the recipient] can screenshot it.*”

3.3. Theme three: Setting boundaries

Foster youth shared several tactics that they use to set boundaries in order to protect themselves online. These tactics are both passive, such as blocking other users, and active, such as directly confronting other users. In addition to the steps currently being taken by foster youth, both youth and staff identified additional practices that they felt should be taken to better protect foster youth from future negative intimate relationships and unhealthy consequences resulting from social media use.

Subtheme 1: Steps being taken.—Because youth participants generally perceived social media as unsafe, they took concrete steps to set boundaries when interacting with others online. Although some are distrusting of all social media users, others believed they could trust users, but must “*have parameters.*” When these parameters are violated, youth expressed readily using features embedded in many social media platforms that are designed to protect them from unwanted interactions. Features discussed include the report, block, unfollow, and delete functions on Instagram. As explained by one girl, after reporting a user, “[Instagram] emailed me back and it was just, like, so we’ve looked over this person’s account and it follows all of the things that was after the whatever [details pertaining to violation of Instagram’s terms of service agreement]. I don’t remember the exact email, I just know that they took down the page.” Notably, although foster youth turn to these features, some question whether or not they truly work. In response to others discussing the report feature on Instagram, one youth in foster care exclaimed “*that crap don’t work. Do you know how many people I’ve reported? I’ve even reported her [pointing to another focus group participant]!*” Staff did not discuss how youth are protecting themselves, but rather focused on their perception that youth are too trusting online and acknowledged that “*as far as technology ... [youth] are aware. They can explain, you know, the systems and the negative effects of this to us better than, I think, that we can to them.*” This highlights that staff often defer to youth as content experts.

Subtheme 2: Needed protections.—Foster care staff stated that in order for foster youth to feel comfortable sharing and discussing their social media activity, it is paramount that staff first build a “*healthy relationship*” with youth. Staff expressed wanting to role-play the conversations that they would have with foster youth regarding inappropriate online interactions. As one social worker shared, “*it’s hard to even start the conversation, like, what is your activity like?*” Having these conversations with youth is important because there are many legal protections pertaining to sexually inappropriate social media behavior that staff felt youth may not be aware of. Specifically, some topics staff wanted to discuss include warning signs of sex trafficking, child pornography, and one’s right to press charges when cyberbullied. Foster youth proposed using social media platforms themselves as a way to encourage safe intimate relationships. For example, boys in foster care suggested posting quotes, motivational messages, healthy relationship tips, and using safe sex hashtags. As youth are already on social media, the participants felt this tactic would be effective at grabbing their attention and “*gettin,’ like, a whole bunch of views.*”

3.4. Theme four: Generational differences

Foster youth and staff discussed the increased use of social media among youth at this point in time compared to youth 20 years ago. The increase in current social media use has created a generational gap in knowledge and the acceptance of use between foster staff, parents, and youth.

Subtheme 1: Increased use and gaps in knowledge.—Both foster youth and staff discussed how social media use has become extremely common, and both expressed concern that youth are using it excessively. Foster youth felt strongly that “*social media, that’s the most biggest thing [in] this generation. social media gon’ be a disease. you can’t walk*

around havin' no phone." Similarly, staff discussed how the *"influence of social media is a lot bigger"* now in comparison to when they were in high school, which is worrisome because although *"[foster youth] are aware of sexting, texting, social media posts, recording things can all be shared, but there's some level of denial."* Moreover, staff perceive youth as being *"tech-savvier than the adults, [which] poses kind of a problem because if you have five Instagrams, and they're all private,"* it becomes challenging and overwhelming for staff and foster parents to stay abreast of youths' online activity. As shared by one staff, *"I have one kid posting gang stuff on one Instagram, but the parent only knew about the other Instagram, and she was proud of herself for knowing about that Instagram."* To close this gap in knowledge, social workers and group home staff expressed the need for both themselves and foster parents to be better informed about social media platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook. Understanding these platforms better would not only allow them to assist youth more effectively, but it would also help them more generally to better *"understand kids nowadays [because] this is their life. This is their focus."*

Subtheme 2: Personal biases.—Foster care staff were careful not to villainize the use of social media, acknowledging instead its potential for having an important role in healthy adolescent development. As noted by one staff member, *"old-school parents might just need to know about [social media] themselves - sexting, to a certain extent - everybody as a teenager probably would, um, explore a little bit."* Further, for staff and foster parents, it is important to *"remove personal biases based on their opinions on sexting or, maybe, social media sharing when addressing it with the kids."* Youth themselves did not discuss the need for parents and staff to speak more objectively when discussing social media, nor did youth discuss seeking support from parents and staff regarding social media use.

4. Discussion

4.1. Addressing trust online

Both foster youth and staff emphasized the central role of trust when building and maintaining intimate relationships online. Staff members' belief that foster youth in relationships are more trusting when sharing private information online when compared to youth who are single is congruent with previous literature. Among general population young adults of a comparable developmental stage as the youth enrolled in this study, youth in a relationship are more likely to sext than single youth (Dir et al., 2013; Drouin et al., 2013; Weisskirch & Delevi, 2011) and send messages that propose subsequent sexual activity (Weisskirch & Delevi, 2011). There are also differences in the type of messages likely to be exchanged, with those in committed relationships sending "nearly nudes" and solo sex acts, compared to those with casual sex partners sending nudes (Drouin et al., 2013).

Current study findings suggest that whereas foster youth believe that they are being cautious when trusting others online, staff members believe foster youth are not being cautious enough. This disconnect could be attributed to changing social norms and increasing prevalence of social media use. Developmentally, youths' behaviors are strongly influenced by their peers and perceived social norms. Indeed, thirty percent of young adults who sext attribute such behavior to pressure from friends or partners (Henderson, 2011). Similarly,

among young adults in committed, casual sex, and cheating relationships, many (23%, 38%, and 13%, respectively) sext because their partner asked them to do so (Drouin et al., 2013). For foster youth, peer norms and social influences may have an even greater impact on their online behavior; simply providing information about the dangers of social media may not be sufficient. Upward trends in use, along with changing social norms and peer influences, need to be considered, as they each may have a compounding impact on how youth define and display “trust” online.

4.2. Safety and setting boundaries: risk perception and gender

Although social media use can result in many positive outcomes, foster youth and staff in this study focused nearly exclusively on negative consequences. Gaining access to potential sex partners (Hightow-Weidman et al., 2015; Holloway et al., 2014), being “catfished” (Stephenson et al., 2018), losing a sense of privacy (Lucero et al., 2014; Stonard et al., 2014), in-person partner victimization (Hellevik, 2019), and sexts being shared publicly (Gustavsson & MacEachron, 2015; Lucero et al., 2014; Stonard et al., 2014) are all potential negative consequences shared by other social media users and the foster youth in this study. The focus on negative consequences of social media use suggests foster youth may experience heightened vigilance and/or negative consequences at greater rate than the general population when online, which should be systematically examined. Foster youth need support to safely navigate intimate relationships online to reduce potential risks and enhance possible benefits.

Study findings indicate there is a gender difference in the way potential risks of social media use are perceived and experienced. Girls in foster care emphasized concerns about being deceived by other users, whereas boys in foster care stressed concerns about girls in care being victimized by older men and girls becoming physically abusive as a result of their trust being violated on social media. In other studies, pregnant and parenting girls in residential foster care have similarly described being physically abusive towards their partner after learning online of their partner’s infidelity (Rueda et al., 2019). Similarly, girls in the general population are at an increased risk of digital victimization and exploitation: boys admit sharing sexts from their girlfriends with their peers is common, whereas girls discuss sexting as a very private interaction (Lucero et al., 2014). Additional research is needed to explore gender differences in social media risk among foster youth.

4.3. Generational differences: youth as experts

Current study findings indicate both foster youth and staff believe youth are more knowledgeable than adults about social media platforms, making it increasingly difficult for foster care staff to adequately support youth, and for youth to seek support from staff and other adult caretakers. Consequently, it is of paramount importance that intervention development is youth-engaged and, when possible, youth-led. Without youths’ involvement in content development, interventions may overlook important, current, and age-specific details, because many foster care staff understandably lack sufficient personal experience and professional expertise in social media use. This is an excellent leadership opportunity for foster youth as they guide both adults and peers in considering how to cultivate online safety and well-being.

4.4. Limitations

There are several study limitations of which to be aware. This study was conducted in the mid-Atlantic region; the large majority (93.75%) of foster youth lived in a group home; and the majority of the foster youth boys (100%) and staff (94.12%) identified as straight or heterosexual. Many of the foster care girls in our sample identified as lesbian or bisexual (83.33%) and the gender of their partners was not always clear when they described their sexual encounters, so we were unable to analyze whether experiences differed by sexual orientation. Further, participants were asked to discuss the sexual health needs of foster youth, which may have steered participants away from uplifting positive consequences of social media use. Despite these limitations, the current study is among the first to explore social media use among foster youth as it pertains to sexual health and is a substantial contribution to the literature.

4.5. Implications for practice, policy, and future research

Foster youths' use and perceived risks of social media to build and maintain intimate relationships emphasize the need for staff training and support. Training should not only be youth-led, but should give special focus to areas where youth and adult perceptions may diverge, with guidance on how to navigate differences in perception. Additionally, child welfare policies that provide guidelines on how staff can best support healthy social media use among foster youth are needed, particularly as youth geographically relocate and age out of the foster care system. Such policies should encourage youths' current healthy practices and focus on areas where additional protections are needed. Further, intervention development should take gender into account because girls and boys in foster care may experience different risks when building and maintaining online relationships. Current sexual health education programs used with foster youth (Combs et al., 2019; Oman et al., 2018) could be enhanced with online relationship content.

This study did not explicitly explore how foster youths' sexual orientation impacts their use of social media to build and maintain relationships, which should be further explored as preliminary research suggests sexual minority youth in foster care are at risk for sexual and other victimization experiences (Baams et al., 2019; Salerno et al., 2020; Wilson & Kastanis, 2015). Future research should also explore how foster youths' experiences vary by age and developmental stage as the benefits and risks of social media use when building intimate relationships may differ. Lastly, in order to protect themselves online, youth report using features available through applications such as the "report" and "block" buttons. Future research is needed to explore what additional protections could be embedded in these applications to further protect foster youth.

5. Conclusion

As social media use continues to evolve, risks may become more prevalent and new benefits may emerge. Thus, it is critical to understand how foster youth build and maintain intimate relationships online and how to help them maximize the benefits of technology-mediated communication. Our findings support that older foster youth are regularly using social media to form and maintain intimate relationships, and are aware of the risks associated with social

media use. Although foster youth believe that they are taking the necessary steps to protect themselves, many foster care staff believe youth are too trusting when interacting with peers and sharing personal content online. Additional support and youth-led social media trainings are needed for foster care staff and other caregivers in order to promote healthy relationships in online spaces.

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Table 1

Sample characteristics.

Variable	Foster youth		Foster care staff	
	M (SD)	Range	M (SD)	Range
Age	17.25 (1.18)	16–20 years	34.31 (8.56)	25–53 years
Female	16.50	16–18	33.36 (8.54)	25–53 years
Male	18.25	16–20		
		Foster youth		Foster care staff
Variable	N	% of sample	N	% of sample
Sex assigned at birth				
Female	6	27.5%	15	88.24%
Male	10	62.5%	2	11.76%
Current gender identity				
Woman	6	27.5%	15	88.24%
Man	10	62.5%	2	11.76%
Sexual orientation				
Bisexual	4	25.00%	0	0
Lesbian	1	6.25%	0	0
Straight or heterosexual	11	68.75%	16	94.12%
Not answered	0	0	1	5.88%
Race (all that apply)				
African American/Black	11	68.75%	11	64.70%
Asian American	1	6.25%	0	0
Biracial	2	12.5%	1	5.88%
Native American (American Indian) or Alaskan Native	1	6.25%	0	0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	12.5%	0	0
White	2	12.5%	7	41.18%
Other	3	18.75%	0	0
Hispanic or Latino	1	6.25%	0	0
Current placement type				
Group home (DSS)	8	50.00%	n/a	n/a
Group home (DJS)	7	43.75%	n/a	n/a
Independent living apartment	1	6.25%	n/a	n/a
Current work position				
Clinical social worker	n/a	n/a	5	29.41%
Social worker intern	n/a	n/a	1	5.88%
Program manager	n/a	n/a	6	35.29%
Director	n/a	n/a	2	11.76%
Senior counselor	n/a	n/a	2	11.76%
No response	n/a	n/a	1	5.88%

Table 2

Summary of themes and subthemes.

Theme 1: Trust	Theme 2: Safety	Theme 3: Setting Boundaries	Theme 4: Generational Differences
Determining an Appropriate Level of Trust	Deception	Steps Being Taken	Increased Use and Gaps in Knowledge
Foster Youth Intentionally Build Trust	Access to Older Men Lack of Privacy	Needed Protections	Personal Biases