

HISTORICAL RECORD Session:

On Becoming Professional

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WHAT DID YOU HEAR? WHAT ARE THE BIG IDEAS?

- Start as youth worker becomes professionalized by social work degree
- Youth work is NOT professionalized in the US
- Should there be a unifying purpose to youth worker, or have it be understood as dynamic ever-evolving?
- Professionalization as distancing (college is not for everyone & everyone does not have access)
- Are there differences between after school worker and other youth workers?
- Being attached to education brings “status”
- OST may be “sucked up” by formal education system due to extended day movement=Urgency to professionalize->creation of core competencies
- More boldy articulate who we are
- Define body of knowledge for youth work
- IS THIS ABOUT BETTER \$?
- Great to be a professional but not a bureaucrat. Being a YW professional means you have something to share.
- It’s great to have values. Why should our field be professionalized?
- How is professionalizing the field going to help young people?
- Differentiate the goal from the way to the goal.
- Context within its professionalize (?)
- Prepared-well training/what is it? Community or formal?
- Value base can unite a/the field
- Professionalism vs. status & how do you gain status?
- To whom is professionalization helpful?
- Could professionalization help youth workers have more control of what & how they do their work? Or would professionalization allow more bureaucratic control over the work?
- A History of US Social Work Professionalization
- Scholarly AND Personal Interest
- Vocational visions→Professional status
- Decade review of field
- Poverty as a central force for a profession—How does the growing rate of poverty now inform youth work field?
- 15 years—period of time when licensing increased
- Non-therapeutic vs. therapeutic identity
- Social work is the promotion of a value base
- What are youth work’s community of practices?
- Is this about knowledge, practice or values?

WHAT DIDN’T YOU HEAR? WHAT’S MISSING?

- How much of youth work is an “art”—intuitive? (From the gut; from the heart)

- Youth worker vs. after-school educator vs. counselor vs. school age childcare worker
- Is skill set different depending on population served? (Ex: youth worker in North Minneapolis vs. Southwest Minneapolis?)
- Will youth work lose its “soul” by becoming filled with bureaucracy necessary to professionalization?
- Is higher ed. the only way to professionalize the field?
- How professionalization would affect immigrant and American Indian communities
- How do you take their (immig. & AI) values into account
- Is the university the place where/who gets to decide what the professionalization (or the values look like with a degree) looks like? To sell to communities?
- Who decides what’s effective, values-based youth work?
- Where do we value youth community as the “professional” in this conversation?
- Definition of “youth work” and how folks see such a clear delineation from “after school” or “education” or “social work.”
- What the value of professionalizing social work was.
- Why [is] social work as a field for comparison?
- Who decides how to frame the field of youthwork—the people who **care** (e.g. self-identified) the most, or is there a more objective method?
- Academia gives a field a space in the world for a body of knowledge

PANEL: “Bureaucratization” as danger of professionalizing field in 3 buckets: afterschool, youthwork, licensed school-age care. Articulate who YW is. Wisconsin Child & Youth Care group; Aesthetic style...school→extended day.

WHAT QUESTIONS AROSE OR LINGER?

- How does youth work become professionalized?
- Are we social workers in disguise?
- What is the conversation about youth?
- What family of practice should youth work bring together?
- Does professionalization hurt the field of youth work?
- The point of professionalization—why?
- What it means to professionalize
- Will we leave good youth workers behind with professionalization?
- What is the end game of professionalization? What are the best means to getting there?
- What is the goal? What are some ways to the goal? (e.g. Improving turnover) [cb note: not sure if that example is supposed to be an example of a goal or of a way to the goal]
- Is a body of knowledge essential to good practice?
- Knowledge↔practice [she drew this as a circle/cycle]
- Prepared workforce questions—access funding; organize to do what you want to do.
- Increase professionalization—Decrease turnover
- Increase professionalization—Increase experience of youth in programs

WHAT NUGGETS, GIFTS, PIECES OF WISDOM SHOULD BE CAPTURED & ARCHIVED AS WE MOVE FORWARD TO DECIDE WHO AND WHAT WE WANT TO BECOME?

- “Mystery & Complexities of Life” →Connectivity
- Multiple pathways that leave no one behind
- We have no consensus other than to provide quality services to youth & communities.

- This debate seems to me to be a tautology

Related Comments from Wall Post-it Notes

CURIOSITY: Professionalism & Field/Discipline

- It is very hard to think of professionalizing the field – practitioners resist and times change
- How do we create value for the choice characteristic of youth work [when] the jobs and money are going toward required expanded day enrichment?
- Social work has been institutionalized (and mandated as a service eg-child welfare). How did this influence it as a profession?
- Do we have a designated value base in youth work that will drive professionalization?
- From Tony's comments – Observation that many early training efforts for YW gave way/declined because of increases and progress in formal education. An issue to ponder as we consider role of higher education in training YW today.
- What are today's models emerging for YW professional development and certification modeled after? Social work? Teaching? Based on what results from these systems?
- Do we expect youth workers to stay in youth work longer because of professionalization and all that goes with it? Where will they go? What will they do? How will opportunities to grow increase?
- If you have a chance to develop the field right now, what would you do? What has the best chance to succeed in really building the field and better services to youth?
- Should the field of youth work become more solidly established before creating credentials? Or will these credentials make us more valid, established, respected?
- What is a discipline and what is it not? How does it differ from the field?

IDEAS: Professionalism & Field/Discipline

- Professional social movement – co-creating language, vision, youthwork versus those who work with youth
- Could/should we be Robes Pierre and follow the social movements and let go of trying to create them?
- Interesting notion of not professionalizing but building the domain on inquiry in youth studies that transcends the disciplines in which people are professionalized.
- Study circle for professional development – groups come together freely to organize own learning - not dependent on outside. Emancipate self from control of employer
- Develop youth studies as a powerful, discrete subject in universities
- How can organizations/work place environments be engaged as active partners with practitioners and universities to provide PD, training & professional learning communities?
- Focus on discipline – not on a profession

ROOTS: Professionalism & Field/Discipline

- Possessing competencies does not mean one is competent
- Concept of youth work as a professional or work with youth
- Mystery and complexity – Jane Adams – early folks not resist professional or training, but mutual – not bureaucracy
- “Acting between” the people and formal institutions – the social workers and/or the youth worker. Role of the youthworker.

- Mid 20th century political society shaped youth work.
- School gives status. People are going to be “afterschool educators” instead of youthworkers.
- Youth work is a lifestyle – a way of viewing life, living life. Amelia Earhart perfect example. How can that (or not) play out in professionalizing “the field”?
- We already have a philosophy – we just need to articulate it. We have positive outcomes – we just need to find the best way of recording them.
- Striking similarities between building youth worker expertise and Konopka’s requirements for healthy development – need for spaces to try things on, make mistakes, reflect and grow.
- Social work, group work, settlement house workers as “connectors going between”

TENSIONS: Professionalism & Field/Discipline

- Professionalism = double edged sword . . . moves out of civil society to agents of the state. Are we trying to run before walk?
- Are competencies based on what youth need? Or what adults need? or How do we determine what are the core competencies – asking youth what they need or adults?
- So many poorly trained Boy Scout leaders (volunteers)... in charge of so many boys...
- Professionalization debate occurs in the organizations and funding and management context.
- Professionalizing the field – need some depth toward defining the tension. Defining domains of knowledge.
- Training educators & training youth workers – tension that Tony Jeffs named in dual training being rejected.
- Professionalization is not a silver bullet.
- Sustaining flexibility without institutionalizing
- I have a lot of tension around using a multiple choice test to assess youth worker competence. It’s pretty much the opposite of “*phronesis*” – it does not allow for complexity. When this links to conversations of professionalizing the field, I have even more tension.
- Professionalization is not the only route to more pay or respect for YW – conversations need to occur in community about what is youth work and/or youth development.
- “Go out there” as a “professional” or as a “bureaucratic professional.” Nothing wrong with professional but how you behave.
- In urgency to professionalize, people are coming up with 4 competencies we all can share. Try to give mobility, respect, general skills, NAA/NIOST all be under big umbrella.
- For youth work not to be co-opted must boldly define ourselves. (Wisconsin and Canada have done so). Borrow from adult education, rec & leisure, social work. what is good youth work? How are we different from education?
- Discipline versus profession. “and” or “or”?
- Draw practitioners and scholars who share the value base.
- Situating youth work in “education” which is inherently conservative (conserving culture, ideas) rather than responsive. Social work as a context for youth work is inherently therapeutic based as a premise.
- Most of the disciplines that arose out of charity and philanthropic study have a history of inherent sexism...how does this impact our discussion of professionalism?
- The idea that we have had 200 years of successive failure in YW training ignores the considerable successes of establishing youth work as a discipline.