

## HISTORICAL RECORD Session:

# Historical Look at Youth Worker Training

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### WHAT DID YOU HEAR? WHAT ARE THE BIG IDEAS

- Earliest year—150 years ago youth work was influenced by education (training school teachers) and religion (Sunday school). Relationships to both have ebbed and flowed over the course of history.
- Social change shapes/reshapes youth work
- Challenge of drawing youth—many ways over history (religion, education, sports, etc.)
- Develop the field of youth studies built on practice experience
- How environmental/social changes impact how we do youth work/our understanding of youth work
- The integration of youth in a more formal setting or Sunday schools
- Youth leading youth clubs
- Constant need to change
- Rich historical legacy of youth work—what worked, what still works, what does not work, what needs to change
- Both the historical successes and failures that have led to the current status
- There is much more needed today—looking (?) at our youth—how can programs transform themselves to meet the “new youth?”
- Who are youth workers? How can we imbed more studies in higher ed & in teacher preparations?
- Throughout the course of youth worker training, a fundamental difference has been whether the youth workers comes from, organically, the group in question versus whether the youth worker is an outsider who needs then to be trained.
- Tony argues that we need a solid knowledge-base that youth workers can voluntarily gather to learn and share.
- Who do those who work with youth work for?
- Needs/goals of society/orgs versus needs of young people
  - What are the tensions?
  - What are our responses to tensions?
  - Social control, societal goals; safety (for & from youth); where do youth’s goals fit?
- Role & importance of youth workers self-designing their education & training

### WHAT DIDN'T YOU HEAR? WHAT'S MISSING?

- Emphasis on youth took about 2 minutes (history of youth programs defined w/adult purposes)
- More conversation about youth work in the US
- More time on the bio/history of American youth work
- Needed time to reflect on today’s implications and to discuss this at our tables & as a group
- Need more time to unpack presentations, ask questions and engage in a healthy debate
- How are we agents for changes in this current m\_\_\_\_\_?
- How do we update ourselves?

- Other histories that have shaped youth work
  - Civil Rights movement
  - Service learning frameworks
- Continuing story to update historical frames
  - School reform discourse
  - “Age of Obama” tensions
  - Shifts in demography
  - “Post-racial” discourses
  - What does it mean to be “patriotic?”
  - 24/7 Information and “misinformation” networks

#### **WHAT QUESTIONS AROSE OR LINGER?**

- Influence of democracy; training for democracy
- More depth with concept of civic society—how does youth work reflect and gain influence through /in society?
- Konopka mentioned but not described (a tribute later in the agenda will fill this perhaps)
- How do we bring what we know (learned) from past to help guide us in the future?
- How do we organize today and how do we start with “who are the youth today?”
- What does it mean to be a fully flourishing person today?
- What are some foundational expectations of “youth workers” today?
- How do we research and study ourselves more fully? What is the new research that needs to be developed and conducted?
- Why are expectations set so low?
- How do we measure/achieve success in these programs today?
- What are the cons to modeling youth worker training to church youth work?
- Is the number of college students registering for classes the right measure?

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

- Is youth work history a series of failures? Little sustainable literature for the field.
- The richness of what goes into youth work knowledge (many disciplines: technology, ethology, religion, education)—book quote
- Where is the best place for youth work? Youth studies? Education? Rejection of the dual training of educator/youth worker.
- Put needs of young people at the forefront for training youth workers.
- Continue to focus on the needs of the young people
- Youth worker teaching other youth workers from their experience
- There is a rich legacy to learn from—that the history is steeped in the social, political and economic times of years past and today.
- This is a contested terrain—from past to present
- Who are we today based on [past public] policies?
- How do young people go about constructing themselves today?
- Need to constantly challenge ourselves.
- Need to see the connections with democracy, civil society & social justice?
- Growing youth workers from the youth we work with, versus training outsiders.

## Related Comments from Wall Post-it Notes

### CURIOSITY: Youth Work Essence, Definition, Tendencies

- Does youth work (should) take place only in the afternoon time?
- Could we ever come under one tent? Tremendous resistance. Tendency to balkanize – as Tony put it
- Youthwork definition? Not work with children? Not extended formal education
- How do we define youth vs. children vs. student vs. young person? What does a youth worker “do” “don’t do” vs. tutor or afterschool educator vs. teacher? What are the differences?
- In Konopka’s study on girls (Sheila’s presentation) it showed that girls wanted a connection with an adult that honored them as individuals and youth work is defined as not about individual but association/group.
- What is the intersection of knowing/honoring youth in association and as individuals and individual growth and development?
- How can we remove silo thinking – YW, OST, SAC? We must – what are next steps?
- Are we so precious about youth work’s distinct approach that we won’t share it?
- Common language
- Will the common language of competencies be a baseline that bridges different elements of youth development – afterschool?
- What youth development approaches globally do not age-segregate youth and consequently work with youth?
- Who are today’s youthworkers? What skills do they need in today’s context?
- How many youthworkers will we need in next 5-10 years? What are the issues facing YWers currently in the field?

### IDEAS: Youth Work Essence, Definition, Tendencies

- This leads to our idea to establish a set of “principles of practice” and “ethical values” for Minnesota – a place to claim “I am a youth worker.”
- Prepare our workforce...address current youthworker workforce issues...promote dialog, thoughtful leaders
- Definitions of settings would help structure conversation – afterschool/non-formal/community based

### TENSIONS: Youth Work Essence, Definition, Tendencies

- Define our work, our values, who we are and what we do ...age, setting, who decides on curriculum – ETHOS
- Afterschool does not equal youth work. But the terms are being used interchangeably.
- What is youth work? Is it possible to come up with a shared/common definition of youth work(er)?
- What is youth development?
- Competencies may not be universal – across class, culture, community
- I was really struck by Baizerman’s comment that in Europe, youth work is professionalized but they still do their work “how they want” because institutions allow it/fund it. That’s our problem – our values are not valued in the U.S.
- Will a baseline of competencies be a touchstone for authentic youth work regardless of delivery system, structure, program or setting?

- Balkanization or specialization
- Tension of “voluntary” and the “custodial” nature of many youth activities (afterschool, parents are working, daycare, extended day are not voluntary)
- Co-creating principles of youth work. Youth work in OST – need to discuss this inclusive, conversational. Is that possible as a system? YD principles to the conversation.
- Very important – Dana Fusco. We have come to individualize youth work – it is communal. Also must ask whether goal of youth work is “individual success” or “community good.”
- How big should our umbrella be? What gets under and what stays out?
- I am struck by how much more powerful we could be if we made sure that “more than youth workers” knew and valued youth and knew how to help them on their journeys.
- What does “youth work” lose or gain by joining with OST and other movements?
- Separation versus integration...silos or unity?