Learning Through Humility: Curating a Clark Youth Worker Training Workshop

Praxis Project Proposal: Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts —- as part of the Community, Youth, and Education Studies Major at Clark University

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Abstract

This study addressed the lack of training that Clark University students receive before entering Worcester community spaces to engage in youth work. Currently there is no official or consistent training for the clubs that work with youth. Our research studied the importance of collaboration when creating a culturally relevant youth worker training curriculum and the impact of our workshop on Clark University students' readiness to properly engage in youth work. The training prepared students to participate in youth work in Worcester with an understanding of their positionality, the importance of their work, proper boundaries with youth, and positive youth work development strategies. We began our research by curating a team of Worcester youth worker professionals to design an inclusive, culturally responsive training. We recorded and took notes on three of our team meetings. The second half of our research addressed the effectiveness of the training by implementing it with Clark students.We observed the training, took field notes and recordings, and collected exit surveys on how the training impacted their preparedness for their youth work in Worcester. Our research demonstrates the significance of collaboration among our team to develop a thoughtful and effective curriculum and how it promoted humility among our team. Additionally, through the execution of the training itself, our data revealed the value in using humility to promote genuine and authentic reflection to properly train Clark youth workers. The shortcomings of the workshop illuminate deeper rooted issues regarding youth work at Clark University and the reflections of the praxis cycle call for both greater collaboration and institutional change in future Clark University youth worker trainings.

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The Key to Successful Youth Work

Growing up, I attended my local Boys and Girls Club nearly everyday after school; it served as child care while my parents were working. I participated in almost every session and I got to know the camp inside and out. Although I was only eight or nine, I could tell this was not a place for students with money. Our arts and crafts consisted of old, dried out markers and broken pencils. Our physical education was not a structured program, but free time in the backyard. Even though I could not put it into words, my younger self knew I was attending an underfunded, overcrowded free afterschool program and I carried a bit of shame because of it. I knew other students were getting to attend things like dance class, piano lessons, and traveling sports teams after school, and I was staying in the cafeteria of my elementary school.

Although the budget never changed, the embarrassment slowly faded away. I eventually came around to enjoy the club because of the connections I made with some of the counselors and peers. One story that has always stuck with me was the first day of the program in 5th grade. One of the counselors was calling attendance and was able to pronounce my name without any hesitation, which never happened, as my name originates from a foreign language (spelled A-I-N-E pronounced Awn-Ya). It immediately caught my attention and I insisted on knowing how she was able to pronounce it. She explained that she too had a name in a foreign language and appreciated when people took the time to learn how to say it. She told me she had looked up my name prior to reading it out to the group. I was very touched; typically, teachers would butcher my name or choose to instead read out my last name. This small action not only made me feel welcome, but also connected me with the youth worker and led to later conversations about being first generation in the United States.

This experience with the Boys and Girls Club shaped my own journey with youth work. Even though many programs in underserved neighborhoods will remain underfunded due to levels of structural inequality, it is important to focus on youth centered programming at all times. A youth centered framework in this area of work helps foster strong connections and welcoming environments.

Based on my experience, the first step in creating youth centered programming is forming a passionate and understanding team. This requires hiring workers or volunteers that are formally trained and understand the responsibilities of working with youth. It is also important to understand the space you are entering, especially if you are not from the community within which you are working.

Our Research

My co-researcher, Elizabeth Fontana, is a fellow undergraduate student at Clark University. We are both pursuing degrees in Community, Youth, and Education Studies and have participated in youth programming at Clark University. Within these spaces, Elizabeth and I have both come across untrained volunteers who hindered children's experiences. The fault lies with the fact that many programs here at Clark do not require any training. Allowing for untrained and inexperienced Clark students to enter community spaces can result in disingenuous dialogue that is not only unhelpful but also harmful.

Our time at Clark University has led us to create the Youth Worker Trainer Workshop. In creating the Youth Worker Trainer Workshop, we wanted to ensure that all Clark youth workers engage in programming for the right reasons, understand the responsibilities and risks, receive proper training, and comprehend the complexities of working with youth in the Worcester community (which means dissecting the power dynamics of a predominantly white institution

taking up space in Main South, a low-income, multi-racial, and multicultural community). Ensuring that youth workers receive this training will help the neighborhood youth receiving programming to feel more comfortable, safe, and understood. We worked collaboratively to create a curriculum with fellow, experienced youth workers and ran the workshop through a dialogic teaching model to allow for participant self-reflection.

While preparing for this workshop and conducting the training, I researched what makes youth worker training successful. More specifically I focused on:

1. How does working collaboratively with a team to design a youth worker training curriculum influence our ability to develop an effective training workshop?
2. What barriers exist in creating a successful youth worker training workshop at Clark University?

Through participatory action research and qualitative research, we analyzed the impact of a free training for Clark University students engaging in youth work in the Worcester community. Through the transcriptions of our team meetings where the curriculum was designed and the training session we facilitated, as well as our exit surveys for participants of the training, we gained vital insight into what is needed in an effective youth worker training workshop and how to instruct the curriculum while uplifting the core principles of humility.

Literature Review (Co-written with Elizabeth Fontana)

While investigating past work that we could use to base our research in, we came across several different projects that relate to the topics that we wanted to investigate. The work that has been done serves as important background and grounding for our endeavors in youth work training. Our hope is that our research will contribute to this body of knowledge and give more

insight into what contributes to effective training. In what follows, we outline the literature that analyzes the need, importance, and the central themes of professional development in youth work, as well as the significance of implementing a training workshop at Clark University.

The Need

Evans and his team (2010) used a web-based survey to address the importance of youth worker professional development experience. The research team developed a self-competency scale to measure features of positive youth development. Of the youth workers surveyed, 41% responded that they received less than six days of professional development training (Evans et al, 2010). This group also scored lower on their self-competency, than the youth workers who received six or more days of professional development training (Evans et al, 2010). The work also points out that across the board youth workers report a lack of support from their agencies in professional development training. The work emphasizes that organizations do not prioritize training, even though there is countless research to support the need for in-depth, professional youth worker training. Lastly, the research advocates for collaborative training methods through community partnerships due to its cost-effectiveness, skill exposure, and ability to overcome cultural barriers (Evans et al, 2010).

Hartje and her fellow researchers (2008) used a web-based self-report survey to analyze the attributes of youth workers engaging in youth work in out-of-school time programming. The data suggested that one of the key aspects for lower youth worker turn over was professional development training, along with several other structural factors (Hartje et al, 2008). Receiving adequate training is important to ensure youth workers feel supported and are committed to the practice so that the youth are receiving consistency and care from their youth workers.

As we looked further into work that has been done with training youth workers in college, we discovered that there are few research studies. A lot of the work that focused on youth work in college investigated more of the long term, academic curriculum for students who were interested in a career in youth work. For example, Shockley & Thompson (2012) discussed how students at the City University of New York could receive a Youth Studies Certificate after a twelve credit program. This program was effective in preparing students to work with young people using a relevant and multidisciplinary curriculum. This model of training used the academic courses provided by the university in order to train students who plan to work with youth (Shockley & Thompson, 2012). Our work focuses more on providing a training that is over a shorter period of time for college students wanting to engage in youth work while they are students. Such a training can reach more students due to less commitment being required, but can help college students involved in college clubs and volunteer projects that involve working with youth in the community. This project hopes to address this lack of research on the training of college students engaged in youth work by providing insights from a training that we developed for Clark students engaged in youth work.

The Importance of Professional Development for Youth Workers

There has been research done on the importance of training that supports the need for more extensive and thoughtful preparation for those working with young people. Bowie & Bronte-Tinkew (2006) talk about the need for youth workers to have more training like the one that we organized. The work argues that training is important to the quality of programming and the sustaining of consistent programming and quality of youth workers within the field. It states that better preparation ensures the longevity of youth workers allowing more experienced workers to stay in the field (Bowie & Bronte-Tinkew, 2006). Guskey (2002) speaks on the

importance of training, but emphasizes the need for evaluation within professional development programming in order for the importance to stay intact. The time and resources of professional development in the educational fields pay off as long as the quality and substance of programming leads to positive outcomes (Guskey, 2002).

Bechtel & O'Sullivan (2006) and Bush (2007) discuss the importance of networking between educators and youth workers of different subject areas and structures of programming in professional development and how that leads to improved work. Bechtel & O'Sullivan (2006) analyzes professional development in physical education spaces and how there are shared goals of social skill building and relationship building with and between students that are important across areas that can be better developed within professional development. Bush (2007) comments on how music education practices are strengthened through multidisciplinary youth work as new ideas and strategies can be sparked by stepping out of the same content area that is consistently being worked within. Our training aimed to promote this networking between youth workers with different focuses in order to promote this idea of mutual growth and skill development.

Laurie Ross et. al (2011) provides research on The Youth Worker Training Institute, which has been successfully training Worcester youth workers for the past twenty-one years. Their work discusses the importance of youth workers being professionally trained to ensure the success of community based youth organizations, which are vital for youth success in many neighborhoods. According to the research, without proper training, community based youth organizations are at risk of failing. Ross et al. (2011) provides three main focuses for a successful youth worker training workshop: youth involvement, peer network, and self efficacy . The work advocated for direct youth involvement in planning, structuring, and executing the workshop.

Secondly, they recommend valuing the opportunities a peer network can provide, utilizing it as a source for youth workers and their youth. Lastly, it stresses for these workshops to focus on self efficacy, meaning the youth workers leave the training with more confidence in their knowledge and capacity to enact new strategies to better support their youth.

Silliman et al. (2020) discusses how training can be embedded within a youth work program by allowing for consistent opportunities for reflection and development. This model is used in many youth work programs, but in many cases, this preparation and reflection does not take place. While we are setting out to offer youth work training outside of any direct program or organization, Silliman et al. (2020) pushes us to consider how an overarching youth work training can allow for more youth workers to have access to training that will be relevant within the work that they do. It also pushes us to think about how we follow up with the various organizations that are sending people to the training to think through and reflect on the lessons.

Mundry (2005) comments on the importance of professional development throughout the careers of youth workers and teachers that is goal oriented and relevant to the work being done in order to keep people in the field and to best serve students. She highlights how training should be embedded within the structures of programming in order to promote long standing growth and reflection (Mundry, 2005). This is a basis for our work as the training that we have developed is in hopes to implement more professional development for youth workers in the structures of Clark University.

Cultural Responsiveness as a Central Theme of Training

There has been some research done on youth worker training that centers cultural responsiveness in its goals. Richmond and their colleagues (2018) focus on the importance of those working in youth programs reflecting on their own experiences and positionality,

especially while working within communities of color. This idea is central in what we wanted our project to accomplish. This idea was also the central theme of an earlier study by Ford (1992) who found an increase in quality of care was linked directly with culturally responsive training. This work has provided some insight on how centering cultural responsiveness in our training can benefit the youth workers. However, the work that has been done has been limited, and there is a lot more room for future work, and we found no research that centered such culturally responsive training for college students engaged in youth work. Our project will help to fill this research gap.

Why a Clark University Youth Worker Training Workshop?

The research that exists on youth work training strongly supports the need for more training within the field to ensure the quality and sustainability of youth work programs and staff. The support for further youth worker training shows the importance of establishing our training program at Clark University to ensure that the work that is being done by Clark University students within the Worcester community is of high quality and has positive impacts on the youth that they are working with. Our research furthers the work being done in the field as it centered positionality and cultural relevance specifically. The work targeted college students specifically, which there has been limited research about considering the rate of involvement for college students engaged in youth work. Our training aimed to provide professional development to individuals involved in youth work in various ways regardless of their academic focus to make up for the lack of training within programs and within academia more broadly. We grounded our work in the information that supports the need for training and the training that has been done thus far, and looked further into what makes professional development effective and what methods work best within training programs.

Conceptual Framework

As our literature review outlined, there is undoubtedly a need for youth worker training at Clark University. My research has sought to address the creating and unveiling of our collaborative worksop, highlighting the keys to success and the barriers to engagement that were found. While forming my conceptual framework, I reflected on conversations and observations within our team meetings and the training itself, revealing humility as the concept most salient for my research project.

Humility

The general definition of humility is understood as modesty, a person who is free from pride and arrogance. When working on a team, this characteristic among members is often seen as either an asset or as a liability. Within the last few decades, researchers and modern psychologists have promoted humility in a positive light, presenting it as a virtue. Mean and his colleagues (1990) define humility as:

> "(1) as a willingness to admit one's real inadequacies; (2) as a recognition that one cannot control all interpersonal interactions; (3) as a general attitude of patience and gentleness with others; and (4) as a platform from which empathy is fostered." (p. 214)

According to Mean et al.'s work, one who possesses humility is someone who is self-reflective and holds empathy, a counterpoint to individuals who act overly assertive or aggressive. Emmon (1999) builds upon the claims of Mean et al., furthering their definition by incorporating balance as a part of humility, grounding one's self worth, having neither arrogance nor low self-esteem .

Tangey (2002) expands the concept of humility to incorporate more than individual characteristics and reflection, defining true humility as evaluating one's ability and comprehending one's position in the universe (Tangey, 2002). This understanding emphasizes the importance of comprehending oneself within the larger picture. For our work, this can be understood as acknowledging one's positionality within a group, a university, or society, ideas which are central to the desired goals of our training.

In addition to this positive psychology conceptualization of humility, Whitcomb and his team have defined "intellectual humility," which addresses the importance of researchers, philosophers, and thinkers to own their intellectual limitations (Whitcomb, 2017). As outlined within their work, intellectual humility is not merely about open-mindedness but addressing one's limitations and responding to them. Andrea English (2016) builds upon intellectual humility, arguing there is an educational nature of humility:

> The moment that one acknowledges that one has a limitation…suggests that one has encountered a blind spot. When this blind spot is "revealed" through our interactions with others—their questions, ideas, perspectives, wishes, writings— and as a humble person we acknowledge it as a blind spot, the self-relation that arises through this moment of acknowledgement is already mediated by our interaction with others who are different from ourselves (p. 535).

English's presentation of humility as a learning process is both intriguing and highly relevant for the purposes of this study. Humility, according to her work, begins with an acknowledgement of blindspots, learning through alternative perspectives, and allowing oneself to be corrected when needed. This progression of humility, both intellectual and educational

humility, emphasizes the need for humble individuals to be aware of themselves and the role they play in relation to others.

This understanding of humility, as a virtue, an intellectual lens, and as an educational tool helped guide our research. Embracing humility is an important part of both leading and learning, making it an important concept to have in both our team meetings and within the training itself.

Methods

Methodology (Co-written with Elizabeth Fontana)

Our research methods were rooted in participatory action research (PAR) (McIntyre, 2008). We had multiple ways of collecting information. We learned from the planning meetings, during which all participants were invited to share their experiences and values. This served as a means to develop a training that is meaningful and effective. During these meetings we audio-recorded and took notes. This allowed us to more deeply analyze the information participants shared and the interactions between participants. We used PAR as our main methodology during the planning stages of our work. There are four main principles that qualify research as participatory action research: (1) A communal effort to examine an identified problem, (2) self reflection from all parties, individually and as a collective, (3) a collaborative decision making process to engage in action that leads to helpful solutions for those involved, and (4) building relationships between all parties involved in the work (McIntyre, 2008). PAR emphasizes constant reflection and development, which encourages critical questioning. For example, who benefits from the research at hand? PAR emphasizes that no one is being researched “on ", but instead researched “with”, as everyone is valuable to the work and has a say in decision making (McIntyre, 2008).

This method is seen within our work, specifically when we engaged with our team for curriculum development meetings. We were members of this team and participated fully in the development of the training's curriculum. We were not simply observing others, we were taking part in the research and learning from the collective experience. We established a team to create this youth work training because we acknowledge that we do not know everything about youth work. We hoped that this environment would be a space where everyone could learn using critical reflection and contribute to the learning community.

We also used qualitative research methods such as surveys and observations during the training to evaluate the effectiveness of the training, and to gain more information about what each participant was thinking and feeling during the session. The anonymous feedback forms allowed participants to share what they thought about the training in an honest way in order for us to understand what went well and what could have been improved. The observations that we made during the training allowed for us to see how participants interacted with the material, the presenters, and each other.

Epistemological Stance (Co-written with Elizabeth Fontana)

In order for the workshop to have been relevant to the needs of the community, it was vital that we take into account the lived experiences of those within youth work and the community. The team was made up of people from various identities and backgrounds so we wanted all participants' knowledge to be valued on an individual level and to be used to create a body of knowledge. This body of knowledge was later used to implement the training itself. Using PAR allowed for all members of the team to be heard and established an environment where no one's knowledge is valued over others, as everyone's individual experience is valued. While working in this space, our hope was to create a vulnerable and productive learning

environment where everyone could grow as youth workers and create an output that would help inform and encourage other youth workers. This was best done using a participatory research approach.

The use of qualitative research methods such as surveys and observations ensured effectiveness in better understanding what each participant was thinking and feeling. Since our workshop was centered around learning through experience and reflection, it was important that our research was rooted in methodology that values the individual. We believe that through observation and surveying we will be able to collect the most accurate and meaningful data that will allow us to understand the most important aspects of an effective youth worker training workshop.

Site (Co-written with Elizabeth Fontana)

Our research took place at Clark University, a private institution, and was held within one of their event spaces. The campus is located in the Main South neighborhood of Worcester, Massachusetts. This area of Worcester is made up of residents who are predominantly people of color. The Clark University official website states that Clark University's student body is made up of 2,349 undergraduate students. Within this group 26% of students from the US identify as BIPOC. International students make up 7% of the undergraduate student body, and the University does not disclose the racial backgrounds of international students. Although our site is Clark University, it is important to understand the surrounding community as well because most of our participants actively do work within the Main South community. According to a report released by the Main South CDC (2020), the racial make-up of the Main South neighborhood is 43.3% Hispanic or Latino, 32.9% Caucasian, 16.1% African American and 11.7% Asian. Also, 21.1% of Main South residents over the age of 18 do not consider themselves proficient in the

English language. Additionally, the average income in Main South is around $26,736, which is nearly $20,000 less than the city median (Main South CDC, 2020).

Positionality

As a researcher and team member for the design of our youth worker training workshop, it is important for me to reflect on my positionality and how it shapes my work. Growing up in a working class household, I was exposed to a myriad of free youth programming. These programs were a great opportunity for my family to receive free after-care and many of them exposed me to forms of art, sports, and activities I would not have been able to take part in if it were not for the programming. The past few summers I have gone back to the Bronx and worked at the same youth organization I once attended. Working there, I have come across a recurring dilemma—many of my fellow counselors were never formally trained and lacked an understanding of the gravity of the work. Having the privilege of being both a trained youth worker and a college student pursuing a degree in Community, Youth, and Education Studies, I have been exposed to guidelines, expectations, theories, and strategies for engaging in youth work. The researchers at The Youth Worker Training Institute highlighted that many youth workers "grew up in the same or similar neighborhoods and attended the same or similar youth programs as the youth they now serve…Growing up in these neighborhoods put these youth workers at a disadvantage in terms of the quality of their education and their access to resources" (Ross et al., 2011, p. 204). As a first generation college student, I have gained privilege in my education and hope to use my degree to help improve the quality of youth programming especially in low income, underprivileged neighborhoods. Providing free and culturally responsive training to Clark students entering the Worcester community allowed me to use my past experiences to create effective change in youth work.

Although my past experiences helped shape the goals and expectations of this project, I have to acknowledge the gaps in my understanding. As a white woman engaged in youth work it is important for me to constantly question my learned biases and actively challenge them in my work. Elizabeth and I both felt that it was important for us to work with a diverse team for the formation and execution of the workshop. Having a diverse group allowed for us to collectively make a holistic curriculum that addresses the myriad of values, cultures, identities, and beliefs the youth and youth workers may hold. Oftentimes the best strategy is to engage a wider community on the project.

Participants (Co-written with Elizabeth Fontana)

Our participants included both our team members who helped to create our curriculum and design our workshop, as well as those who attended the event. Our team was made up of experienced youth workers from a variety of organizations and backgrounds to ensure that a holistic training is developed. It was important for our team to be a diverse group of people to guarantee creating culturally responsive aspects of the curriculum. Through weekly meetings and conversations, we hoped that a mutual trust could be formed among our team members for there to be an effective and productive youth worker training workshop.

Within the group that we developed there were three trainers that have a long background in youth work[1]. Johnson is a Clark University Professor that has a Master's of Education degree. She is a Black woman, a mother, and a lifelong Worcester resident. She has acted as a professional trainer for several non-profits and youth-outreach programs for over two decades. She has done research in developing youth work trainings and has been involved in numerous youth work projects in Worcester. Davis is a director of a community-based department at Clark

[1] For the purpose of privacy, all of our participants and trainers have been given pseudonyms.

University and is a Clark University Alumni. She has a masters degree in both Community Development and Planning and Business Administration. She is a Latina woman and is a lifelong youth worker, as well as a political figure in Worcester. Lewis is also a Clark University Professor and Department Director. She is an author and has published a number of pieces and research on youth work and professional development in youth work. She has done work in creating community partnerships with young people. She is a white woman and a mother.

The participants who attended the workshop were all Clark students who are involved in youth programming in the Worcester or Clark community. Although we promoted the event as a space for all students regardless of their educational or involvement background, only students who are actively engaging in youth work attended. A majority of the attendees are pursuing a degree in education or community, youth, and education studies. We had a goal of 25 participants for the workshop, but we only had 8 participants. It is also important to note that although Clark University is a predominantly white university, only two out of the eight participants identified as white.

Data Collection (Co-written with Elizabeth Fontana)

The data collection strategies that we utilized within our research included audio recording and note taking during planning meetings and the training event, as well as a final feedback survey that we distributed at the end of the event. The survey that we used asked questions about the participants' experiences within the program and suggestions for further training (See Appendix A).

In regards to the audio recordings and field notes taken during the meetings, we transcribed them and identified key themes. This analysis guided our curriculum and how we conduct the training workshop, so this evaluation happened continuously throughout the

semester. Following the conclusion of the training, we went through the surveys and audio recordings of the training session and highlighted the major takeaways of what was successful and what could have been improved.

Data Analysis

My primary source of data collection was audio recordings and field notes for both the planning meetings and the workshop itself. The data analysis was rooted in the concepts of humility and praxis, as the collaboration within the planning allowed for our team to embrace the virtues of humility. Through dialogue and active listening, we were was able to assess our individual abilities and identify blind spots, developing a stronger curriculum out of this acknowledgement.

Our audio recordings and field notes from the youth worker training were analyzed to observe the impact of embracing humility, blindspots and positionality through dialogue, which is rooted in humility. Engaging in this workshop with a praxis mindset demonstrated the value in balancing theory and practice and learning through meaningful dialogue. My indicators of successful engagement included connection among participants, an increase in self-efficacy of attendees, and genuine reflection of their positionality and role in youth work. I also made note of the different voices that spoke during the training and how people built on the ideas that were shared by the different participants in the dialogues.

Lastly, the post workshop surveys provided feedback on what went well and what our team can improve for future training. This was also rooted in humility and praxis as it allowed Elizabeth and I to accept critical feedback and for the cycle of praxis to improve this project for future endeavors.

Findings

What happened?

When Elizabeth and I began this research project, we had identified a pressing issue regarding Clark University's lack of youth worker training before entering the Worcester community and engaging with its youth. Through a Frierian lens we were able to see an opportunity to enact change through discourse in both the planning and execution of our training workshop. We believed if we embraced humility, our research team could work collaboratively to design a thorough, culturally sensitive, and informative training program specifically designed for Clark University students. Curating a diverse team with expertise in the field, both in theory and in practice, would allow for us to have an expansive curriculum. Additionally, we thought if we presented this training as an opportunity to better yourself as a youth worker that Clark University club members would attend in order to grow as youth workers and benefit their students. Teaching with humility and care would allow for genuine dialogue and reflection. Curating a space in which people felt comfortable being vulnerable and admitting their weaknesses with our professional trainers, would allow for the youth workers to leave our training better prepared for the field. We believed that if we were able to accomplish curating this positive, empathetic, and reflection workshop, it would benefit not only the youth workers and Worcester youth, but also the relationship between Clark University and the Worcester community. To engage in any proper youth work or community work, the power dynamics between our institution and the surrounding neighborhood had to be addressed. Acknowledging the power we hold as members of an institution taking up space in the Main South neighborhood is vital. Without this reflection, our actions in youth work programming may be well intended,

but harmful. There is complexity in our positionality as people, as college students, and as individuals tied to the name Clark University.

Team Building

When Elizabeth and I arrived on campus senior year we were eager to begin our recruitment process for assembling the team to design our curriculum. As undergraduate students, we felt ill-equipped to create and execute an entire youth worker training. We knew that in order for this training to be successful we would need professionals with experience in the field and in youth work theory to join our team. In the beginning, we had hoped to collaborate with about five youth worker professionals, wishing to pull from as many backgrounds as possible. We wanted to curate a diverse team that all shared a common passion for youth work. We began by reaching out to our past professors, Clark University staff, and community leaders. By October, we were able to get three trainers to agree to the task at hand: two professors and a Clark University staff member. All of the trainers were women who had experience engaging in youth work and youth work theory. Two of the trainers, Johnson and Lewis, had collaborated on a youth worker training curriculum and research project in the past. Although the group was smaller than we had anticipated, Elizabeth and I were excited to work with experts in the field and were aware that a smaller team had its benefits. Having too many opinions on our project could have created roadblocks.

Throughout the semester, we realized the scheduling difficulties that came with working with professionals. As undergraduates, Elizabeth and I had a lot of flexibility within our schedules, but the trainers had many commitments that made it quite difficult to organize a common meeting time. Rather than everyone meeting in person, our curriculum meetings quickly became one-on-one zoom calls.

Curriculum Meetings

In early October we held our first virtual meeting with trainers Johnson and Davis. The meeting began with introductions, after which Elizabeth explained our research project. She informed Johnson and Davis that Lewis was also interested in being involved but was unavailable for this meeting time. We expressed that our ultimate goal was to execute a one day youth work training for Clark students engaging in youth work in Worcester. Elizabeth also explained that we were inspired to create this project based on past experiences we had with our Clark affiliated youth programming because there was a "pretty severe lack of training amongst college students." (Curriculum Meeting Recording, October 16, 2023) We had prepared the following questions for the meeting to gain more insight into their perspectives:

1. Do you think training is important to successful youth work? Why or why not?
2. What training have you had throughout your career? Do you think it was successful? What aspect do you think was the most beneficial?
3. What do you think was lacking in your youth worker training? What was not effective or positive?

In regards to the first question, Johnson and Davis expressed that they both viewed training as "crucial" and "extremely important." Johnson expanded on this thought, noting that because many youth workers are often thrown into their practice unprepared: "Any amount of training, even if it's a one day, introduction thing…that may lead to other opportunities too would be really helpful" (Curriculum Meeting Recording, October 16, 2023).

Davis expressed that the training is important considering that youth work is influenced by all dynamics within the program:

> I feel like I think of youth work as like building an ecosystem in the program itself and like if you're not trained to do that and create that ecosystem with those students then

> stuff is gonna trickle into it and there could be harm that takes place and so I think that's really what I think is important. (Curriculum Meeting Recording, October 16, 2023)

Davis's description of youth work as an ecosystem re-emerges throughout our conversations and training, as she upholds youth work to be a very collaborative and intentional practice.

The question regarding their past training outlined what Elizabeth and I suspected: neither of them received much training until later on in their careers. Johnson indicated that many of the organizations she has worked with offered opportunities to attend conferences once she had already begun her work. Davis noted that the training she eventually did receive was larger, national programming. In that training, she did a lot of role playing and troubleshooting, which she views as important for emergency preparedness.

At this point in the meeting, we took time to reflect on our own training as youth workers. Elizabeth described how she has observed a lack of support and community for Clark youth workers and how it impacts the success of the youth work she is a part of. I agreed with her and noted that very few of the youth work spaces I have been a part of have addressed the complexities of Clark youth programs doing work in the Worcester community.

When they were asked to expand on their past training to clarify what was most beneficial, both trainers provided key insights. Johnson noted the importance of identity:

> I think…being a Clark student and coming to the Worcester community...identity and positionality and power...I think that those are really...key pieces. (Curriculum Meeting Recording, October 16, 2023)

Davis agreed with the points made by Johnson, expanding on them and emphasizing the importance of reflective practice as well as helping youth workers develop a necessary skill set.

> Giving youth workers tools to be like 'yeah you can have like positive narration' as opposed to like a punitive experience in youth work. What does that look like, we can role play that…how do you deescalate the situation, how do you do opening circles and closing circles and thinking about like the way the room is structured. So I also think about the reflective part going with the practice part and how those things go together throughout the youth work experience I guess. (Curriculum Meeting Recording, October 16, 2023)

Between the two responses from Johnson and Davis we can see the importance of tangible skills and self reflection emerging as core concepts to include in our training workshop.

The third question, which concerned ineffective aspects of prior training, brought to the surface key insights from both Johnson and Davis. Johnson opened with the significance of who delivers the training. Johnson explained how she has learned through her training organization that lived experience and past front line experience in youth work is vital for a successful trainer. She noted that she has worked with executive trainers that are great connections, but lack the authenticity trainers with first-hand experience hold. Davis shared her belief that an ineffective youth worker training would be one that is not interactive and is conducted by a trainer who is not aware of the importance of creating a safe space. She referred back to her ecosystem analogy: "You need to create the ecosystem and the trainer should also be aware of creating the ecosystem for those being trained" (Curriculum Meeting Recording, October 16, 2023).

During the discussion of what makes for an unsuccessful youth worker training, both Johnson and Davis focused on those conducting the training. Positionality of the individual running workshop is crucial. This includes whether or not they underwent youth work training

themselves, if they have real life experience they can pull from, and if they are aware of the role they play in facilitating safe-space reflection.

We ended the conversation going over logistics for future meetings and our general timeline for the project.

For our second meeting, we wanted to go over what our team would wish to see in our curriculum. At this point in our research we had outlined the following as key aspects for the workshop:

1. Boundaries with students
2. Understanding how your background may be different from students
3. Creating community
4. Mentorship
5. Managing students behavior

We began this meeting by presenting these core concepts to the trainers and received feedback. Also it is important to note, due to continued scheduling conflicts, we had to move forward by having one-on-one meetings with the trainers.

During our second meeting with Davis, she agreed with the general layout of the event and connected us with people who would provide resources for the workshop. Also during this meeting, she highlighted our team's need to develop desired outputs for the training and for the format to have different styles of engagement to confirm all types of learners are connecting with the material stating:

> Well I can think of things like activities for all of those…but if I'm thinking about those being the outputs that you want the trainees to receive…I think a variation of activities to get there that include like 'I do, we do, you do' like very basic concepts like doing things

> independently, doing things in pairs or small groups, and then doing things as a big group to capture learning styles…something else that I would be cognizant of as you're creating activities is ensuring that like different types of learners are able to engage. (Curriculum Meeting Recording, November 15, 2023)

Davis wanted to verify that our activities had a direct, desired outcome to make for the most effective training. When we discussed the possibilities of which trainer would take on which categories, she emphasized her familiarity and past experience with positive youth development and restorative practice. Due to her being trained in these areas, and having previously led training on those topics, Elizabeth and I decided she would be best suited to take lead on these sections.

Due to scheduling issues, Lewis was unable to make it to our first and second meeting so we decided to meet with her individually. The conversation followed the same structure, we introduced the concept of our project and the reasoning behind it. We proceeded to ask the same set of questions regarding the importance of training for successful youth work, her past training, and what she found effective and ineffective in said training. Similar to Johnson and Davis, she had not received much training prior to engaging with youth. Through these discussions she did raise some important notes. Elizabeth and I had been using the word "training" to describe the workshop and Lewis stated the following:

> I think the word training is kind of an interesting word . . . I actually think of it as more like professional development. I think that professional development is really important for youth workers and partially because I think the work is so important, so treating something that's important by. . . knowing that there is training…that there are things you need to learn to do it…its not just any one can do it and it's not like you wake up one day

> and are like I'm going to go play with kids. (Curriculum Meeting Recording, November 15, 2023)

Lewis questioned framing our work as training and promoted using the phrase "professional development." She believes that treating this work as important means using the vocabulary to describe it as such. Additionally, Lewis reflected on the schools of thought behind youth work. She stated that "sometimes lived experience is not actionable." She believes that balancing lived experience and professional knowledge is most important when preparing people for youth work.

We then transitioned into the questions we prepared for the second meeting. We presented Lewis with the potential topics that we wanted to see at the workshop.

Lewis agreed that these were all important aspects to include in a training and that she has had a lot of experience with dilemma based role play and encouraged us to include a positive youth development framework. When we shared with her the predicted schedule she noted the limited duration of the training.

> So three hours is not a lot of time…maybe even think about the follow [up] . . .what would the next steps be or even to integrate into this day like now that you've had this what would you want next? (Curriculum Meeting Recording, November 15, 2023)

Lewis stressed the need for the workshop to not only be about the training, but also a center for making connections and support. How can we support them after the three hours are up? What resources can we connect them with? These were important questions for our team to consider before presenting our workshop.

The remainder of the meetings covered the logistics of the training. Johnson agreed to run the mandated reporting and dilemma based role play sections because she has conducted past

training on both. In Lewis's second meeting she agreed to run the positionality section, with an emphasis on writing positionality statements in regards to youth work. We presented the trainers with their allotted times and requested they send us any presentation slides and materials they would need for the day of the workshop.

Determining the Layout

Elizabeth and I both knew all of the trainers before beginning this process which meant there was already a layer of established trust during our meetings. The trainers agreed with our opinions regarding the state of training for youth workers at Clark University. They expressed a desire for Clark to require students to undergo some form of training before beginning youth outreach programming.

By the end of the fall semester we had designed a curriculum with five main sections:

1. Mandated reporting taught by Johnson
2. Dilemma Role Play taught by Johnson
3. Positive Youth Development taught by Davis
4. Restorative Justice Practices taught by Davis
5. Positionality taught by Lewis

Each trainer got to decide what they were going to teach so we could best utilize their specific expertise. The order of the training followed the list above and was determined by the availability of the trainers during the time of the training. We would have preferred to open with positionality, reflecting on our identities before beginning dilemma based role play or positive development frameworks, but we had several schedules to work around.

In the planning stage, Elizabeth and I also determined how we wanted to measure the success of the program. Since much of the workshop depended on independent reflection, we

knew field notes and audio recordings would not suffice. We decided to include an anonymous survey for the participants to fill out after the session. The survey provided a space for criticism, positive feedback, and areas in which training could have been expanded.

Executing the Youth Worker Training Workshop

Prior to the training Elizabeth and I secured the location, presentation materials, supplies, and lunch for the day of the workshop. When we arrived to set up in the morning, we attempted to rearrange the room to be functional for both lectures and discussions. The room layout was designed like a classroom, but each student would have a partner at their table for their small group discussions. We had hoped for 20-30 participants, but we only had 8. We were discouraged by the turnout, but the smaller group did allow for more fruitful discussions throughout the training. There were no major hiccups during the workshop and each trainer ran their topic and affiliated activities smoothly.

Each trainer used their time differently and according to what they were teaching. Johnson used the space in a way that is typical for classroom lectures, presenting on mandated reporting. The participants were actively taking notes and asking clarifying questions. Davis used slides but sat in the center of the room, wanting to create more of a circle for discussion. She was teaching positive youth development and restorative practice, encouraging openness and pointing out the value of using the physical space in a way that works for what you are doing with your youth. Her activity (and assessment) had our participants create mock lessons using a formal lesson plan template to include aspects of positive youth development. Lastly, Lewis did not use any materials but instead had an open discussion on positionality and the importance of positionality statements in non-academic settings like youth work. She gave the participants time to reflect individually and asked guiding questions and prompted important thoughts on identity.

At the end of the three hour training, we requested that those who participated fill out an anonymous survey on how the overall training went. We were able to take substantial field notes and audio recordings throughout the day.

Where things didn't go as planned

Our overarching goals were achieved through this process, but we did not anticipate running into multiple scheduling issues during the planning stage and for the training itself. We had hoped that the curriculum designing stage would have been more collaborative. We wanted the trainers to have the opportunity to discuss with one another, not just Elizabeth and me. The meetings were still helpful and we were able to work around their schedules and relay their input to one another. Additionally, for the day of the training, participants did express shock at the fact that we began with mandated reporting. This topic is heavy and most assumed we would begin with something lighter for the day. However, I do not believe this hindered the effectiveness of the training in any way, it was simply not the ideal order of events. Furthermore, our team wanted to open with positionality statements, allowing for reflection to take place before more of the action based lessons. Unfortunately due to the schedules of our trainers, we had to close with positionality.

In terms of our participants, we did not reach the target audience we had originally hoped for. We aimed to have 25 to 30 Clark students participate from a range of different Clark University youth outreach clubs. We had a total of eight participants and only one Clark club was represented among the participants. Additionally, we set out to design this curriculum for Clark students engaging in youth work, but especially for those who had never received training before. Those who attended the training were all previously trained and had already been exposed to most of the content of the workshop. Although they still benefited from the training,

our target audience was not there. Lastly, our positionality section was most important for white youth workers at Clark and only two out of our eight participants identified as white, even though Clark University is a predominantly middle and upper class, white institution.

Exit Surveys and Confirmation

The exit surveys were filled out by six out of the eight participants. Some filled out the survey directly after the workshop and others were reminded of it later in the week. The overall data shows that the participants found the training helpful and agreed that there was a lack of training for Clark youth workers. Participants noted that trainers were engaging and very skilled in their areas. They also commented on the importance of incorporating reflection and positive youth development into youth work practice and the informativeness of the mandated reporting section. Participants noted that they would have appreciated a bit more time for serious reflection and acknowledging Worcester demographics directly. Participants also remarked that if the training is to continue or be expanded that it should be mandatory for Clark students who are engaging in youth work and should expand to cover inclusion practices related to "gender, family, structure, disability, etc."

The opinions that surfaced during the exit surveys showed us that this issue was not only present in our circles and clubs, but that across the board Clark organizations were failing to train their volunteers before working with Worcester youth. Within our exit survey data, our participants said the following regarding the training itself

- I felt that all of the professionals were skilled presenters/facilitators with relevant experience in the city of Worcester. I appreciated the inclusion of both academic and experiential experts in the training. Another strength was the racial diversity

of the presenters, which contributed to the discussions of intersectionality and positionality.

- I really liked that it covered a wide breadth of topics; I think Davis's presentation really illustrated how crucial and interconnected every facet of positive youth development is, and how we can incorporate it into all aspects of Youth Work.
- I liked the "mandated reporter" section. I think it was very helpful.
- I enjoyed the way that the training was set up: I think having separate presenters allowed the three hours to go by faster and keep me engaged. I also appreciated getting lunch :)) (Post Workshop Feedback Form, 2024)

These comments reassured us that the training, regardless of the low turnout, was overall successful in helping Clark students think about their positionality, their youth work framework, dilemma based role play, and the role they play as a mandated reporter. One participant even reflected that they would have wanted the training to be longer: "Although I arrived late, I would have been open to a longer training as all of the topics presented felt important and worthy of more time" (Post Workshop Feedback Form, 2024).

The exit survey provided key insights into what our participants gained from attending, what they would like to see in future workshops, and confirmation on the need for a consistent Clark youth worker training workshop. See Appendix A for full survey data.

What was Learned?

Within my conceptual framework, I discussed concepts of humility and praxis. These ideas guided Elizabeth and I and allowed us to create a thorough and effective youth worker training workshop, through the open dialogues held in both the curriculum meetings and the workshop itself. These guiding principles also illuminate the reasons behind why our project fell

short, providing potential explanations for the low turnout and the steps required for a more effective Clark University youth worker training in the future.

Humility

When Elizabeth and I undertook this project, we knew we wanted it to be a collaborative process for two reasons. First, we acknowledged that as undergraduate students we are still learning foundational theories and gaining professional experience in the field. We were aware of our inability to produce a thoughtful and effective training solely on our own. Second, we knew approaching this collaboratively would allow for a more honest and vulnerable project. Ensuring our team was embracing this tenet would encourage our attendees to do the same. This authenticity would allow for our team to address our blindspots and design a more effective training. For our attendees, this would empower them to feel more comfortable reckoning with their own blindspots, molding them into better youth workers. This collaboration allowed for a culture of humility to be established among ourselves and with our trainers. I have outlined the following ways humility was weaved into our workshop through the following categories (1) Owning our Limitations (2) Self-Awareness (3) Praxis (4) Positionality.

Owning Our Limitations.

Once we began our curriculum planning meetings, we came across several difficult questions. How do we navigate a realistic timeline for the event, ensuring busy college students will show up and that we can accomplish what we need to get done? How do we incorporate adequate theory work and tangible skill sets? How can we make time for both reflection and action within the workshop? How do we manage the ambitious task of providing training to Clark youth workers? The answer we found while collaborating with our team of professional youth workers was to embrace our limitations. Echoing the sentiment of our trainers in the

earliest stages of our work, this training was never going to be perfect. Our team had to begin by admitting we would face barriers. But we remained determined because we believed that providing a thoughtful training is better than the current alternative of no training.

The first challenge was determining how the workshop would operate. We decided that getting college students to agree to participate in several days or sessions of training was unlikely. We felt as though having one three hour training would be the best way to ensure students could commit to attending and be able to remain thoughtfully engaged throughout the workshop's entirety. Johnson provided key insight on a way for us to ensure that professional development training does not completely stop once Clark students leave our workshop.

> I think the structure is great…let's say you have the folks that are gonna come in through this and they're gonna do this three hour training…I'm just thinking like after they finish this...how can we connect them in so they're not lost? One thing that I can offer is we do have the [Organization Name][2]…which is something that I facilitate once a month and...there is also a list serve that is connected to that where resources, job postings, different things like that are sent out. So I can, if you want to, share with them the email address and say 'hey if you're interested in joining the [Organization Name] or being part of this list serve' if they send me an email I can add them on and that way at least they're kind of connected in the youth work world as they're going forward. (Curriculum Meeting Recording, January 18, 2024)

Johnson provided a resource we could connect students to after our workshop. This ultimately led to our team creating our Exit Pamphlet on Youth Work Resources (See Appendix B). This flier served as a reminder for attendees to not consider their work complete, and to continue to educate themselves and grow as youth workers. Our pamphlet promoted courses,

[2] For privacy reasons, identifiable information, such as organization names, have been redacted

books, podcasts, and mandated reporting information that addressed the topics we covered in our workshop. At the end of Johnson's section, as well as the end of the overall training, we promoted her organization to encourage youth workers to stay connected and feel supported in the youth work world. Due to the solutions discovered in our collaborative discussions, Elizabeth and I felt more comfortable promoting a shorter training, balancing the work being done in and out of our workshop. Like English (2016) conceptualized in her work, our team addressed a blind spot (attendees lacking support after the three hour training), but through a collaborative discourse we pooled all of our resources and embraced our limitations within our single 3-hour training session.

Self-Awareness.

The second part of our workshop planning was determining how we wanted to structure our workshop. As previously mentioned, our team had acknowledged our inability to conduct a "perfect" training, so as we embraced this humility, Elizabeth and I opened up the collaborative process and asked 'what would a "beneficial training" look like to each of the trainers? All of them generally agreed on the importance of providing theory to frame youth work, but also tangible skill sets for the youth workers to use in their programming. Davis reflected on the importance of balancing what our workshop provides to our attendees.

> Yeah, I think identity is the best…tier one that everyone needs to do, and reflection as a part of that, right, like reflective practice is something we want to do and model throughout the training and…Also, I think…giving skill set[s]…like the actual skills that people need... its okay to learn about creating reflective spaces amongst the team right? Like at the end of your youth work session you should do highs and lows and talk about what you all just experienced right? Also giving youth workers tools to be like yeah you

> can have like positive narration as opposed to like a punitive experience in youth work right. What does that look like, we can role play that like when a student is like popping off at you because x,y,z, like how do you deescalate the situation, how do you do opening circles and closing circles and like thinking about the way the room is structured. So I also think about like the reflective part going with the practice part and how those things go together throughout like the youth work experience I guess. (Curriculum Meeting Recording, October 16, 2023)

During our planning dialogues, Davis often spoke on this topic. She was passionate about ensuring the Clark students in attendance would leave with skill sets and be given examples to use in youth work like opening and closing circles (activities that foster community and honesty within youth spaces). She expressed the importance of giving the students concrete examples of how to engage with youth as well as a guiding framework. It became clear, quite quickly, that Davis held the passion and expertise to run the section regarding positive youth development and restorative practice. Her genuine reflection and self-awareness of her skill sets and values allowed for our team to gain a better understanding of who should run what section. As discussed in my conceptual framework, humility is not only about owning limitations, but truly assessing one's abilities (knowing the strengths you can bring to the table). From here, we discussed the qualifications and passions of our other trainers, unanimously determining the outline of the training. Davis's honesty within herself and with the group allowed for us to utilize the skill sets of our trainers and establish collective humility among our team.

Praxis.

During our first meeting with Johnson and Davis, we asked the professional youth workers to reflect on what was not effective in their past training. Johnson embraced honesty,

reflecting on her past experiences running youth worker trainings and was open about where she had gone wrong.

> I think that who delivers the training is really important...even just through running the [Organization Name] and choosing trainers…we've had some amazing trainers...and we've had trainers that weren't necessarily so great. I think that a lot of it is based on [lived experience]…lived experience as a youth worker is awesome if they have that in their kind of repertoire. We've had folks that have been…executive directors of youth work agencies that have been trainers for us that are great connections but weren't necessarily great trainers because…they know what's needed but didn't necessarily have the experience of providing actual front line youth work to be able to draw reference from…I think...that part I think is really an important piece that I'd want to make sure is there. (Curriculum Meeting Recording, October 16, 2023)

Through self-reflection, Johnson took part in the cycle of praxis (reflection, theory, and action) and learned from her past experiences. This honesty of where the organization had room for growth, ensured that Elizabeth and I did not make the same mistake. Being able to acknowledge the role that our positionality plays, like lived experience within the context of youth work, is vital. This discussion further solidified our decision to work with Johnson, Davis, and Lewis. All three of the women shared a history in the youth work field that included front line experience. Additionally, Johnson and Lewis both share an academic lens when viewing a youth worker training workshop, as they have co-authored research on the very topic. This allowed for our training workshop to authentically provide both real world and theoretical concepts of youth work to our attendees. Participating in this work with humility means acknowledging the positionality of everyone involved in the project. We must think about our

position in the universe, ensuring that we possess the skills and abilities to provide effective change (Tangey, 2002).

Positionality.

In our first meeting with Johnson and Davis, when we were discussing the concepts that are most beneficial to have in a training, Johnson organically reflected on her positionality as a Worcester resident. Seen as neither myself nor Elizabeth are from Worcester and attend a private institution that holds significant influence over the Main South neighborhood, we were pleased to know that one of our trainers was raised in Worcester and has done most of her youth work in the area. Below, Johnson contemplates on the nuances of her positionality, expressing how her identity as a Worcester local does not automatically make her a representative of that neighborhood:

> I think that…a Clark student and coming to the Worcester community…I think that identity and positionality and power…those are really…key pieces…even myself as I was born and raised in Worcester and I did my youth work in Worcester but I think that…being able to also understand though that regardless…there was still a power differential. My positionality was a key aspect of that and how do I present in those spaces. (Curriculum Meeting Recording, October 16, 2023)

This reflection and humility of Johnson shows her willingness to not accept a surface level understanding of her positionality within the work she does. Perhaps a more arrogant trainer would assume that their experiences and education makes them entitled to speak on the matter, but Johnson humbly contemplates how she is perceived in spaces, whether or not she is intentionally promoting this narrative. To embrace true humility one must acknowledge their positionality within their work. Johnson's self-reflection sparked important dialogue for our team

to think about as we collaborated. How would the trainers be perceived by the attendees? How would possible attendees perceive the workshop itself? These points were important to consider when designing our curriculum.

The humility that was fostered within our curriculum planning was carried into the execution of the workshop. Through Lewis's positionality section, participants were able to consider their identities and how they are perceived within their youth work spaces. Participant Taylor reflected the following within her draft positionality statement:

> I talked a lot about my identity as being from Worcester and being a first generation student, me being Asian and queer, but also think about what that means...just because I share those identities does not mean I can place that experience on every student from Worcester some people have different experiences...different parts of their identity I guess. (Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024)

Similar to Johnson, Taylor is also a Worcester resident, and through her reflection piece unpacks what that means for her youth work. Sharing identities with the youth you are serving is important, allowing the youth to see themselves represented in the trusted adults around them. However, like Taylor notes, this instant familiarity can not result in a shortcut for genuine understanding and connection between the youth and youth worker. Taylor's reflection signified the importance of humility within positionality, connecting identity and blindspots as concepts that are vital to consider in both curriculum design and within a youth worker training.

Collaboration, Humility, and Curriculum Design.

This collaborative process allowed for Elizabeth and me to learn from our trainers and develop a well rounded curriculum for our workshop. Through the use of critical dialogue and prompting questions, we were able to foster a sense of openness among our team. We embraced

our imperfections and limitations, focusing on working collaboratively to organize a balanced workshop. A curriculum that provided tangible skill development, individual reflection, identity work, and theoretical framing for youth work was our best solution to the apparent training issue at Clark University. This entire process was highly reflective, requiring for our entire team to consider their past experiences, strengths, weaknesses, and positionality. This collaborative process highlighted the importance of our team members modeling what they are teaching to our participants (the same way they should model for their students). Ensuring that our team had done thoughtful reflection before engaging in this action, following the teachings of praxis, allowed for the transformation of our attendees into more prepared and conscious youth workers. This transformation was observed through the conversations and students' reflection within the workshop, which will be addressed in the following section.

Blind Spots and Positionality in Training Workshop

The collaborative nature of the curriculum design process allowed for honesty and humility to be carried into the environment of the training workshop. Because of these guiding principles, the attendees were exposed to thoughtful dialogue surrounding the five topics.

Throughout the training, humility was discussed but the word was not used directly. Davis and Lewis discussed the concepts of blindspots in their training, acknowledging that we all have them and accepting where our strengths and weaknesses lie is vital for youth work. They expressed the two principles of combating blindspots:

(1) Having the ability to admit we are not perfect and never will be

(2) Facing the blind-spots head-on to ensure they are not causing barriers in your work

As Davis explained so eloquently in her training, we are just facilitators. Although many of us go into youth work with good intentions, (e.g. to provide resources and connections to communities that are often underserved), not viewing this as a blindspot can be detrimental:

> Positive youth development is also not white saviorism and so not that you have to be white to be a white savior but we all hold institutional power by being affiliated with this university right? And so if you're interacting in those spaces with youth you are already coming at it from a point of privilege and white saviorism or this idea that 'I need to help them…I feel so guilty that these kids' . . . all those things are natural emotions to have . . . Positive youth development is a framework [that] is contrary to that train of thought right? So like I always say kill that part of your brain that wants to save this child and remember that this child has autonomy. That this child has skills, power, relationships, and they have the ability to mold their own future. You are just the facilitator. (Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024)

Many of us hold emotion in our work, creating blindspots for holding students accountable. These conversations of accountability are where youth learn the most, making it essential for youth workers to have a firm comprehension of their role in the youth to youth worker dynamic (facilitator not friend). Although many youth workers do not want to admit to having a white savior outlook or to priorly having one, there is naturally a complexity to Clark students engaging in youth work in the Worcester area due to the institutional power the university holds. Davis's discussion was frank, pointing out a massive blind spot of many youth workers through discussions of white saviorism within the field. She then opened the conversation to the participants to self-reflect, allowing them to address their blindspots and navigate solutions through dialogues with others, the core principle of humility. The students

were asked to identify the goals of their youth work through a positive youth development based lesson plan, ensuring the programs were mutually beneficial for both the youth and the youth worker and eliminating a layer of white saviorism within Clark University youth workers.

In addition to Davis's, Lewis's section also helped our participants grapple with their blindspots. During her segment, she provided our attendees with a positionality statement outline, which prompted them to think about identity. After Noah read aloud a draft of his positionality statement, Lewis pushed him further posing these questions:

> And maybe question seven is one of the most important ones, in what ways does understanding your positionality help you see which young people you might favor or prioritize and where your biases or blind spots might be, what are you not able to see given your own experience? And…which all leads to the last question about having this experience...having the opportunity to think deliberately about who you are and what you're putting into the work, …I mean you'll always have blind spots but whether or not being aware of them can help you in the work. So all that to say, that was a lot of words, but making that realization of those three things, how does that make you think about the youth work you do and the blind spots you might have? (Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024)

Noah responds by saying:

> Sure.…Blind Spots specifically I think…I come from a privileged stand point in my family…white, middle-class, straight, cis-man and with a family history of no food insecurity and stuff like that, I think I do have a blindspot for students who are suffering from those things and how it changes some aspects of being able to focus in the classroom, having a sense of belonging in the classroom and stuff like that. So I think I

> do have a blind spot in terms of different walks of life to that capacity so I think that's something I am going to need to focus on when doing youth work and when being a public school teacher. (Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024)

Noah reflects on how his positionality and lived experiences have led him to perceive the classroom differently. Lewis having this dialogue with him and prompting him to dive deeper into his blindspots, allowed Noah to face these concepts head-on. He did not simply focus on his socio-economic status or his ethnicity, but also addressed how these identities, when combined with his life experiences, create the possibility for disconnect between him and his youth that may struggle with issues such as "food insecurity." Acknowledging it and being aware of our internal biases can begin to break down these barriers and for all of Noah's youth to feel heard and understood in his youth spaces. Noah's reflection serves as an indicator of success for the training. Through our curriculum designing meetings, we expressed that our goal would not only be tangible skills, but also genuine self-reflection. Noah's original positionality statement did not address his limitations and weaknesses outright, but through the guidance of our trainer Lewis, Noah was able to identify a blindspot, acknowledge it, and theorize on possible solutions.

In addition to blindspots, positionality was discussed throughout the entirety of the workshop. Our positionality is reflected in everything we do and our trainers were able to prompt our participants to learn / to experience the training with this outlook in mind. During Johnson's Mandated Reporting section the participants were asked to discuss a prompt regarding how to handle a dilemma regarding the safety of a child. Adrian reflects on the dilemma as well as their positionality. The conversation went as follows:

> Riley: Edgar has always been a little "dad." He seems to take care of other children. You

> have noticed that he always seems especially concerned about his three younger siblings. Today you caught him stuffing extra snack in his pocket. He said he needed to take it home for his brothers and sisters.

Johnson: What did you discuss?

Adrian: We discussed the kind of immediate inclination to offer resources regarding food insecurity to the family, have this conversation with the child about…what his siblings need…[and] kind of thinking about what would be the best way to approach offering these types of resources…probably talking to the parent or guardian and also thinking about what the best manner to do that might be. I'd also [say] as someone who works in a LGBTQ+ youth program I am not always the best person to have the conversation with the guardian because if their children are 13 and up they are able to [attend] our program…but [their family] may not necessarily know the queer aspects of the group so thinking about ways to protect that child's privacy regarding what happens in the group when approaching the guardian absolutely. (Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024)

Adrian, in this role play, was engaging in reflective action that was keeping the youths safety and privacy as a major concern when addressing the possibility of food insecurity. Adrian, prompted by Johnson, considers how to approach this dilemma with humility and honesty to ensure that the youth's needs are being centered. Adrian considered how they present themselves and how they could possibly be perceived by the family of their youth, acknowledging that they may not be the right person to engage in the dialogue with the youth's family. Additionally, Adrian is demonstrating the significance in reflection before action in youth work, deliberating on what is best for their youth.

Approaching blindspots and positionality with honesty and humility, allowed for our participants to have time to reflect on the goals of their youth work, guided self-reflection, and gain tangible skills, like the ability to create a positive youth development centered lesson plan. To not acknowledge and grapple with one's blindspots and positionality results in a false confidence and unauthentic youth worker engagement.

Addressing Low Turnout

Throughout this paper, I have presented the successes of this project but have yet to properly address its shortcomings. As discussed in the first half of my findings, the turn out for our youth training workshop was much smaller than the number we were aiming for. Not only was the overall turnout smaller than we had hoped for, the students who attended did not reflect our ideal target demographic. When we first took on this praxis project, Elizabeth and I envisioned our participants to be students who are engaging in youth work at Clark University but have undergone little to no training. We had reached out to several Clark youth work clubs and programs, receiving confirmation from several that they would be in attendance. Then, on the day of the training, Elizabeth and I were quite disheartened, considering we had a total of eight participants and only one student club represented.

Seeing as those who attended reflected that they got a lot out of the training workshop, why was the turnout so low? Was it the fault of Elizabeth and I? Have Clark students been disillusioned into believing they do not need training? Is engaging in this work too challenging for privileged Clark students? I believe our lack of data speaks to this topic and provides several potential explanations for our low turn out.

The Surface Level Excuse.

A phrase that can be heard on any college campus is "I'm too busy," as college students often struggle to balance their academic workloads, jobs, and social lives. Considering this, the Monday following our workshop I was not surprised to hear, "Sorry I couldn't make it, I was just too busy this weekend," from several peers who assured us they would be in attendance. Although neither Elizabeth nor I were surprised, we were disappointed. We had considered busy college schedules when deciding how to conduct this workshop, especially considering we fall under the same social and academic pressures as those we had hoped would be in attendance. We confirmed that the date, Sunday, February 25th, would not align with any major holidays or campus events. We selected the day of the week and the time slot (12pm to 3pm) considering when it was most realistic to get college students on campus for training. Considering that our team kept this in mind, the only sacrifice Clark youth workers needed to make was surrendering three hours on a Sunday. This justification of being too busy, is the surface level excuse. I believe it reflects deeper rooted issues of Clark University youth workers which I outline as the following:

(1) Youth workers who are engaged for the wrong reasons

(2) Youth workers who fear reflective work

(3) Youth workers with false confidence

Engagement for the Wrong Reasons.

There are many characteristics that can be attributed to a good youth worker, like dependability, compassion, empathy, and integrity but there is one overarching value that should be present among all youth workers: centering youth. Ensuring that the values and needs of the

youth being served are central in the programming design can better guarantee that the work we are engaging in is not merely self-serving or a form of white saviorism.

As a predominantly white university, with a median family income of $114,600 (Aisch et. al, 2017), Clark University is often attended by students who come from a place of privilege. Our youth outreach clubs work within the Worcester community, most of which focus specifically in the Main South area. The Main South community is predominantly Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and has an average income around $26,736 (Main South CDC, 2020). This difference in demographics between on campus and the surrounding neighborhood is apparent. With this context in mind, it is vital that Clark youth workers are centering the needs and wants of Worcester youth, to not feed into the savior narrative that may already be present.

Our team developed this training as an opportunity for youth workers, both trained and untrained, to develop their skills and grapple with the institutional powers at play. The lack of student attendance reflects that some students may be prioritizing their own needs and schedules, over providing authentic youth work in their programming.

Fear of Reflective Work.

Beyond prioritizing themselves, there is an additional layer to why our turnout may have been so low. Elizabeth and I heavily promoted this workshop as a way for Clark students to reflect on their positionality within their youth work. Positionality, power, and identity were discussed through all segments of the training and was entirely the subject of discussion for Lewis's section. Engaging with these ideas and owning one's unearned privilege or disadvantages is not easy work. It takes honesty, humility, and vulnerability to be able to reflect on the position one holds in institutions and in communities. It is easier to write off this work and

claim to “not see race,” but addressing our privileges and blindspots allows for authentic, productive youth work to take place.

It is not uncommon for white people to shy away from conversations, but this demographic are the ones who would benefit the most from these open conversations in our workshop. Only two out of our eight participants identified as white. Considering that Clark University is majority white students, these demographics allude to deeper issues among Clark youth workers. Humility, as I have outlined above, means considering yourself in the larger picture. How am I perceived within the walls of the programming? How does my identity contribute to connections or barriers with the youth I am serving? How can I ensure the identities of youth are uplifted even if I may not share those identities with them? White Clark University students are failing to consider their role in the larger power dynamics at play. This is not to say white students can not engage in youth outreach in Worcester, but rather bettering yourself as a youth worker requires an element of genuine self-reflection. Engaging in these conversations to gain a deeper understanding of your identity within the context of Worcester youth work will allow for less unintentional harm and sincere programming. These youth workers, the ones that failed to attend, are reflecting a lack of humility, a quality that is essential for engaging in meaningful youth work.

False Confidence.

Another important note about our participants was the roles they held within their programming. About half of those who participated in the training, Noah, Emily, Lily, Michael, and Riley were E-Board members of the same Clark University youth club. Adrian expressed recently being promoted in their youth outreach program, taking on higher ranking leadership responsibilities. Amelia and Taylor had done past youth work, but were no longer actively

involved. This data suggests that a majority of those attending were holding leadership positions in their youth work, perhaps feeling more of an obligation to attend training where they would better their skills and reflect on their practice.

What does this show about Clark youth workers who did not attend? Are they falsely confident in their abilities, lacking humility to see where they could benefit from a youth worker training? I would argue the data supports this claim, showing that those who are more qualified attended because they had a better grasp on the seriousness of their work. Often lower level youth workers or volunteers view their work as "fun," which it can and should be, but this outlook fails to understand the importance of the role youth workers play. To not view youth work as important, means to not view your role in it as important. This lack of seriousness may provide these youth workers with false confidence and those with leadership roles with an obligation to better themselves. This sentiment was shared by participants who attended the training as well. One participant reflected in the anonymous survey:

> I wish more people came to the training, as I feel that those who showed up are not necessarily those who would most benefit from the training (Post Workshop Feedback Form, 2024).

To not embrace humility, meaning to not challenge yourself and engage in difficult self-reflection, allows you to develop a false confidence. Those who attended our workshop were open to taking on this work, having enough belief in their abilities to admit their shortcomings, blindspots, and positionality within the field and their youth work programming.

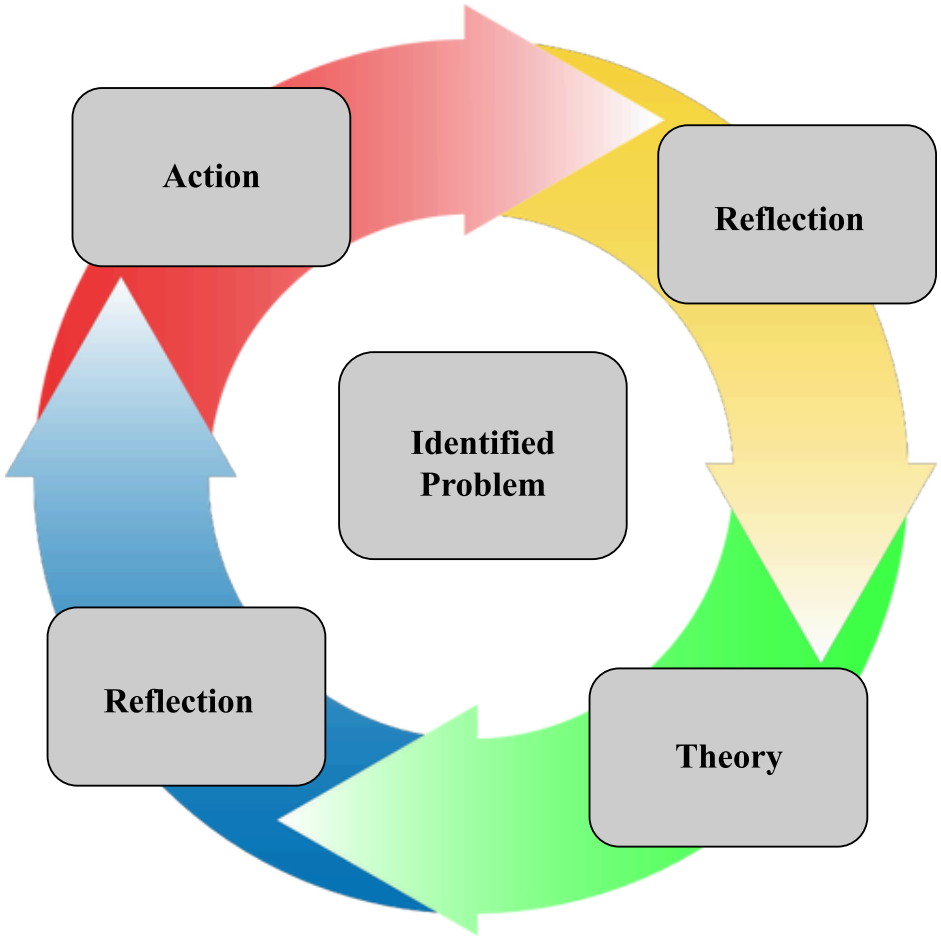
Concluding Thoughts on Low Turnout.

The attendance of our training unveiled systematic problems at Clark University. When we began this project we hoped to present a solution to the apparent lack of training, but the

response from Clark University youth workers and clubs reflect that there are stronger, underlying issues that need to be addressed on a larger institutional level. I believe that centering the needs and wants of Worcester youth is the ultimate goal that all youth work programming should follow. Every youth worker should be mandated to undergo training such as ours and every club should be able to justify their programming in the Worcester community. On an individual level students should be asked to complete a reflective application. This reflection would allow students to contemplate their call to action, diving into their reasoning for pursuing youth work in Worcester, reflect on their positionality as an individual and Clark student, and define their own values and goals within the field. Ensuring there is structure to support Clark youth workers entering with genuine reflection, tangible skills, and positive development outcomes, is a step in the right direction for tackling the white saviorism that is apparent within our clubs and university.

Reflection of the Researchers

As previously explained, praxis is about reflection and action. Within the context of our project, Elizabeth and I have engaged and are continuing to operate within the cycle of praxis work. Below I have outlined our engagement with the following steps:



Identified Need.

Prior to beginning our project, Elizabeth and I identified a need within our community and campus. Through our experiences with our Clark youth work clubs, we had observed the harm being done by untrained youth workers in the Worcester community. Failing to train our youth workers, meant we were failing the youth being served.

Theory.

We developed a theory of change, believing that designing a curriculum with a collaborative team of youth worker professionals would provide a needed solution to this evident problem. Through open dialogue, self-reflection, and humility we believed we could address the

institutional power dynamics and white saviorism mindset that was apparent in some Clark youth work circles.

Action.

After our identified theory of change and genuine reflection, Elizabeth and I felt prepared to transition to action, executing our youth worker training.

Cycling back to Reflection.

This project, and this paper, have allowed for a second round of reflections, continuing the cycle of praxis. As discussed throughout the findings, I was able to deem several parts of our project successful. Through the genuine engagement from the participants and the confirmation within the exit survey data, the content and execution of the workshop was effective. The failures of the project lie in the attendance. Within my findings I address the possible reasoning for Clark youth workers not attending the workshop, but what can be learned from this?

I believe our attendance signifies a more grievous issue within Clark, but also within our research team. When Elizabeth and I identified the problem, we jumped too quickly into finding a solution (creating and executing a training) that we did not reflect nearly enough on who our audience was. We had failed to address our own blindspots within the research. Whether it was naive optimism or our lack of experience with community engagement work, we believed that with the right promotion Clark youth workers would attend this training. We had not examined the deeper rooted issues, outlined above, that were hindering Clark youth workers from coming.

Additionally, Elizabeth and I were not practicing what was being preached within the workshop, we had failed to consider a sort of second level white saviorism between our research project and the youth workers. Before beginning this project, Elizabeth and I did not ensure that

those who attended our workshop would get more out of this project than the two of us. How could we have assessed that our attendants were benefiting more from the training than us? What could we have included before beginning to guarantee that we were not engaging in this project for self-serving reasons?

I think a simple solution to all of these questions could have been more collaboration during the design of the workshop. We did not consider including student voices in the curriculum meetings. Something as simple as a google form could have provided us insight on what youth workers at Clark University were seeking, needing, or wanting for in a youth worker training. This openness from the researchers could have created a more welcoming environment, building this ecosystem of reflection and humility that we wanted to foster for our workshop. These questionnaires would have not only provided them a voice within the training, but acted as a promotion of the event as well. Although it would have been difficult regardless of the circumstances to have college students attend a non-mandatory training, there are some steps we could have taken to be positive that the youth workers found this project mutually beneficial.

In addition to further collaboration within the designing stages, we also could have made the recruitment process more collaborative as well. As discussed, those who attended were mostly youth workers who held leadership positions within their programming. Knowing that this is a demographic that will likely attend future workshops, a good strategy for a following youth worker training would be greater promotion to the leaders of these clubs and organizations. Having direct and open conversations about the importance of the training and their responsibilities to heavily encourage their youth workers to attend, could result in higher youth worker turn out. Elizabeth and I should have had more humility in our recruitment, embracing

our limitations as college students and utilizing the influence of leadership positions within Clark youth programming.

The beauty of praxis allows for Elizabeth and I to acknowledge this shortcoming on our end, not beginning with a thorough enough reflection, and allow for the next cycle to address it, creating a more effective and thoughtful second youth worker training.

Conclusion

Summary

When Elizabeth Fontana and I began this research project we had assessed a problem surrounding the current state of youth work programming at Clark University. Through our own experiences at Clark, we were able to see the direct negative impact of having no official youth worker training for our student body. We saw an opportunity to engage in meaningful participatory action research, while also addressing an issue that was impacting Clark students and Worcester youth. I wanted to focus on the following two questions:

1. How does working collaboratively with a team to design a youth worker training curriculum influence our ability to develop an effective training workshop?
2. What barriers exist in creating a successful youth worker training workshop at Clark University?

As reflected in the findings, working collaboratively with a team of youth worker professionals was vital for our training workshop to be a success. Through this collaborative process, we were able to embrace the values of humility to develop an expansive curriculum that covered the core aspects of engaging in youth work and the specificity of being a Clark student entering the Worcester community. We faced challenges as undergraduate students attempting to

work with busy professionals, but the benefits outweighed the drawbacks. Our work became slightly less collaborative, as we had to switch to online, one-on-one zoom calls, but Elizabeth and I were still able to learn a lot through their past experiences, expertise, and opinions regarding successful youth work and youth worker training.

The training itself was successful, although the turnout was much lower than we had been hoping for. Through this research I have identified three possible reasons behind why our attendance was so low, all resulting from a lack of humility within their youth work.

(1) Youth workers who are engaged for the wrong reasons

(2) Youth workers who fear reflective work

(3) Youth workers with false confidence

All together, the sections of our training provided our participants with tangible skills to use in their programming, framework to guide their practice, and self-reflection to ground their youth work.

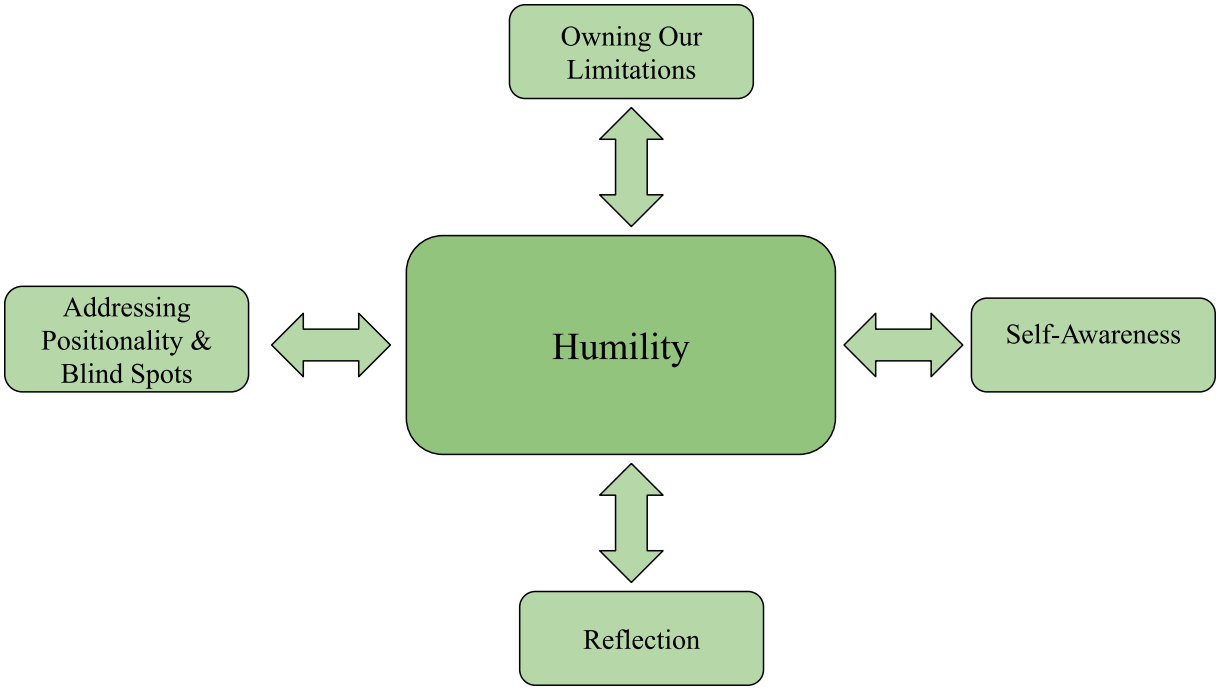
The responses to our exit surveys demonstrated that our participants found it helpful for their professional development as youth workers. They reflected on ways we could enhance the training, such as including longer time allotment for reflection, additional inclusion practices, and more context for Worcester demographics. Although the training workshop did not go entirely as planned, our research demonstrates the significance of humility as a core principle in the planning and execution of youth worker training and the severity of Clark University's lack of training. Our research and reflection signify the importance of engaging in praxis work for community change. We do not need to view our low attendance as an automatic failure, but as guidance for the next Clark youth worker training workshop to dive further into the collaborative process and focus on reaching those who have chosen not to attend.

Collective Analysis

Through the completion of this project, I have highlighted the importance of collaboration within designing and executing a youth worker training for Clark University students. From the conception of our research proposal this project has been a partnership. Elizabeth and I paired up, acknowledging the inherent benefit of partnership, and used our joint knowledge, connections, and experiences to create a more holistic, collaborative project. At their core, community and youth work are fields that thrive on the power of coaction. The success of our team's curriculum and implementation speaks to the conceptual framework that grounds collaboration: humility. True collaboration can not exist without humility, everyone involved must be willing to admit their strengths and their limitations. Embracing humility and viewing ourselves in relation to a larger, overarching goal, our team was able to take part in genuine reflection. Our trainers acknowledged their past mistakes in trainings, their blindspots, and their perceived selfs.

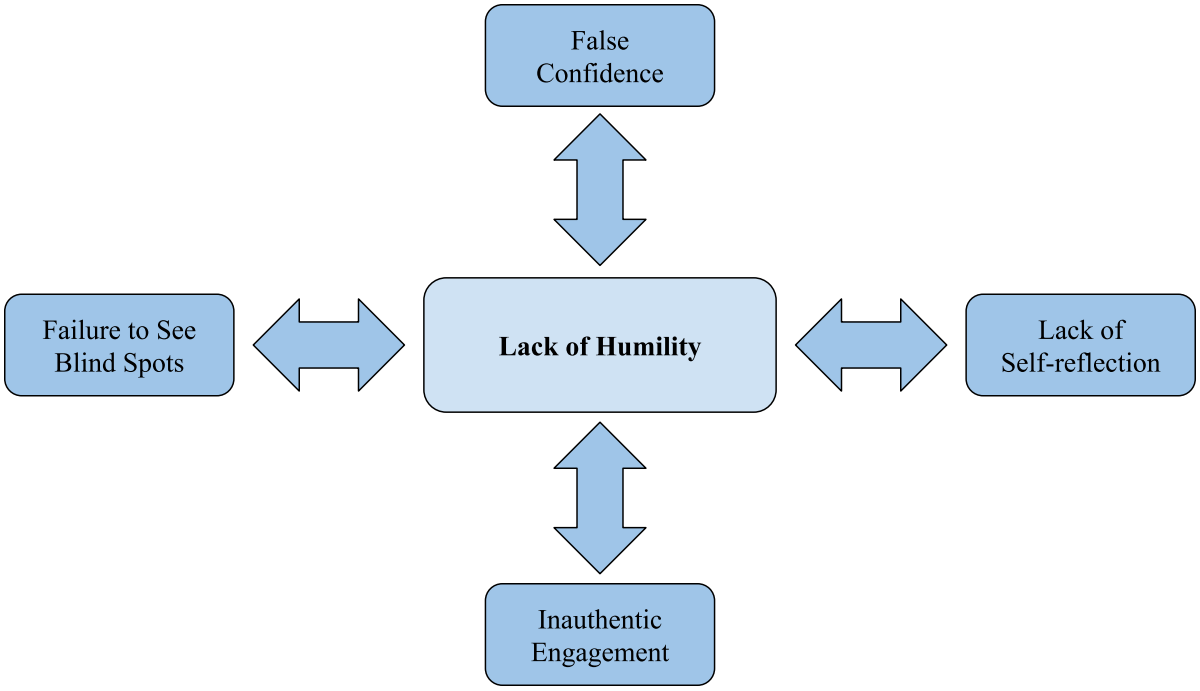
Intentionally designing our curriculum with humility resulted in the same values to be prevalent in the workshop. Students' reflections and engagements highlighted the required openness, honesty, and humility to engage in our training genuinely. These guided conversations contributed to our participants self-efficacy, providing them youth work theory and practical skill sets.

Through my research I have outlined the key aspects of embracing humility within community engagement and the execution of our youth worker training.



Humility at its core is about being modest enough to admit one's faults or limitations. Our project builds upon this understanding and presents the four concepts of humility within the eyes of a youth worker training workshop (1) Owning Our Limitations (2) Self-Awareness (3) Reflection (4) Addressing Positionality & Blind Spots. Engaging the work with these concepts in mind will lead to humility being a cornerstone of the workshop.

Throughout our project there were many facets where humility was thriving, but it also depicted areas where the lack of humility hindered the effectiveness of the training. Seen within the participants who did not attend and within the lack of reflection among Elizabeth and I, an absence of humility was recorded.



Based on the development and execution of our training workshop, to not lead with humility at all stages of the process will result in one or all of the following occuring (1) Failure to See Blind Spots (2) False Confidence (3) Lack of Self-reflection or (4) Inauthentic Engagement.

Through the praxis cycle, a process rooted in humility, Elizabeth and I were able to develop a way to think through our project and understand how we can build upon our work for a more effective youth worker training in the future. The second round of reflections allowed for me to unveil deeper rooted issues within our institution and our youth programming, retheorizing what the "identified problem" truly is. This cycle of reflection, theory, and action could not have successfully continued without the inclusion of humility and collaboration throughout every stage of our project.

Collaborative work uplifts humility within ourselves, our trainers, our curriculum, and our participants. Humility within our youth worker training required authentic reflection and dialogue, which provided our participants with the tools to make transformational change (either

as youth workers themselves or within their larger youth work programming). Viewing our work as a praxis project has allowed for us to continue the cycle of humility, accepting where we went wrong and what concepts could be adjusted for our future youth worker training. Collaboration, humility, and praxis are all interwoven factors that are essential to not only have, but utilize, within the design and execution of a youth worker training

Theoretical Implications

When I was constructing my conceptual framework I read several past definitions and presentations of humility. At its core, humility is about the ability to be modest, someone who is free from pride and arrogance. Throughout different scholarly research this understanding has been expanded for different contexts. Through the data I have collected, I believe I have begun to outline a youth work specific conceptualization of humility. As displayed above, the four main factors of embracing humility within a youth worker training are (1) owning our limitations (2) self-awareness (3) reflection (4) addressing one's positionality and blindspots.

To engage in youth work in this manner means having confidence in oneself. Being able to admit your shortcomings, limitations, and blindspots signifies that you have enough belief in your strengths to truly embrace constructive criticism. Those who engage in this work, and attend youth worker trainings, are the individuals with confidence. Further research could address these two concepts and their correlation with one another, developing an understanding for how to build this self-assurance among our youth workers.

Collaboration, a foundation of our research project, is the epitome of humility. Knowing your limitations and admitting that, in some cases, it is far more effective to pool your knowledge. Collaboration leads to greater confidence, resulting in greater humility. My research

presents an inherent link between collaboration and humility, providing evidence that within youth work and youth worker training, one can not truly exist without the other.

I have also outlined a framework to approach not only youth worker trainings, but all community engaged work (following the steps of joint reflection, development of a theory of change, reflection, action, and post-action reflection). This framework cannot be followed successfully unless humility is embraced at every turn, as we saw through the shortcomings of our project. Elizabeth and I failed to conceptualize possible barriers between the training and Clark youth workers, resulting in a much lower turnout than we had hoped for.

My research has outlined both a framework for change and a framework of humility within youth work. Further research is needed on the two and their relationship to one another within the context of youth work and community engaged work.

Implications for Practice

Throughout this paper, I have had the opportunity to reflect on the successes and shortcomings of the Clark University Youth Worker Training Workshop and my research. Through this deliberation, I have outlined the following implications for future youth worker trainings and research: (1) Beginning with recognition (2) Building a Team (3) Executing the Workshop (4) Thinking Long Term.

Beginning with recognition

Before undertaking a research project such as this, future researchers should ensure that the training is a need. Being able to identify which groups are seeking it out and which are not can act as your first piece of data. This can include conversations, interviews, or surveys with

university students and community members. This will be confirmation that your project will make a difference, assigning value to your praxis work.

Learning from our shortcomings, it is important to include these conversations as a way to make the project more collaborative, humble, and democratic. As researchers embrace the humility of not holding all the solutions or identified problems, hearing from the study body and the community will act as an outline for what is vital to be included within the curriculum.

Building a Team

As reflected within our curriculum training meetings, who conducts the training is an essential question to ask. Understanding their positionality, skills, and lived experience will allow for a more authentic workshop to take place. Our team was made up of a diverse group of women, all having a long history with youth work (experiential, theory, and practice). Our exit surveys noted the significance of team building as well, highlighting that it led to more productive conversations surrounding positionality and engagement regarding their topics. Future researchers should grasp this significance, working with qualified professional youth workers with a wide variety in their backgrounds.

Something that would be beneficial to include as well is community members. Even if they are unable to join the team for the execution of the workshop, gaining their opinion on the curriculum and training outline could provide more specificity for that particular university. Embracing the specifics of that university allows for a more effective, authentic workshop to be conducted.

Recruitment

One of the most important lessons to be learned from our project came out of the mistakes we made during the recruitment process. As discussed, Elizabeth and I blindly assumed that Clark youth workers would attend a training, if given the chance. Due to our own blindspots and lack of reflection before undertaking the project, we failed to understand the deeper rooted issues within our university.

The outlined barriers (1) engagement for the wrong reasons (2) fear of reflective work and (3) false confidence are aspects that relate to the inherent power dynamics between Clark University students and the surrounding Worcester community. For future researchers, who are conducting youth worker training at private universities, it is important to consider these factors and theorize on other possible barriers for their specific student body.

Knowing what we know now, Elizabeth and I would have gone about the recruitment process differently to ensure that these hesitations among the student body did not stop them from attending our training. Honest and open dialogues between campus leaders, signifying the importance of the training and the consequences of ill prepared youth workers.

Additionally, incorporating student voices in the curriculum planning through anonymous survey data could have created a more welcoming environment. Elizabeth and I also could have been more vocal about the training in person. We utilized email chains and electronic fliers to promote our event, but did not consider in person promotion, which would have put a face to the researchers and made for a less intimidating workshop. As Davis outlined, youth work is about building an ecosystem. For such reflective, vulnerable work researchers need to ensure that the space is designed for learning, growing, and humility.

Executing the Workshop

Future researchers should keep the outlined core principles of humility for a successful youth worker training in mind when conducting the actual workshop, as well as attempting to identify other salient qualities to continue the cycle of reflection in the praxis project.

For gaining a better attendance, future researchers should consider the value of collaboration, like previously mentioned. As they develop their training they can strategize on specific incentives for their student body that could get more people within the room. Additionally, being open about why youth worker trainings have had a history of low participants could fuel conversations surrounding white saviorism on college campuses and their youth work programming. These community conversations could inspire students to rethink their engagement and see the value in attending reflective training.

Thinking Long Term

Another important feature of our project was its longevity. Effective community change is not short lived, so future researchers should deliberate on how their workshop can be maintained for years to come. This can include presenting the data to university chairs to have it be an institutional change or taking a student route, developing a student run organization dedicated to the continuation of an annual youth worker training. Longevity can be achieved through formal documentation, like through the creation of a website or social media page where the curriculum, recordings of past trainings, resources, and space for feedback are available.

Limitations

If Elizabeth and I were to redo this project, I would follow a lot of the work that we have already established but make some important adjustments. One of the biggest limitations we

faced was working around the Clark IRB standards. The IRB provides needed accountability, assuring that the research we are conducting is ethical, but seen as our research was participatory action research we struggled to fit their structure of research. If we were given the opportunity to remodel our curriculum planning, with an adequate amount of time to abide by Clark IRB standards, it would have been beneficial to include input form Worcester community leaders that are not as connected to the world of academia as the trainers we had. Their lived experience and opinions on Clark youth programming in Worcester would have been beneficial for our team to hear in the curriculum planning and for the participants to hear about in the form of a keynote speaker. Due to the timeline of our research, this task was difficult considering our limited connections to qualified community leaders. Additionally, as Lewis highlighted in her meetings, it would have been amazing to include an actual Worcester youth in this research. Seen as the rest of our research participants were over the age of eighteen, including a minor would have caused us to have to resubmit our IRB proposal. Having input directly from Worcester youth would have cut down some of our team's speculation about what specifics were needed for a Clark youth worker training workshop.

Based on some of the participant feedback, I think if we were to conduct another training workshop it would be beneficial to have more time for reflection. This would result in a longer training, but the allotted time seemed too short for such important work.

In terms of finance, if we had the resources to include keynote speakers or other trainers that would have improved the workshop. In some of our curriculum meeting plans our trainers promoted their connections and encourage us to reach out to them but many of the individuals required payments of $500 or more which was not within our research budget.

Significance

Although some of our goals did not come to fruition, there were benefits to this work. Our research project has led to the development of a Clark University specific youth worker training curriculum, a living document that can be used and adapted for future cohorts. Our study has sparked more dialogue and conversation surrounding the current state of youth worker training at Clark University. Our research took the first attempt in establishing solutions to the lack of training. I hope that our research can act as a catalyst for institutional change at the university. It is important for us to hold our university accountable for training their student body before allowing them to enter the Worcester community. As our research has shown, youth work is important and it is vital that organizations treat it as such, providing adequate and accessible professional development to youth workers. Although many Clark students have the passion and drive for youth work, our research illuminates potential reasoning behind our low turn out. Having Clark University mandate the training would ensure that our youth workers are undergoing training, but would still fail to adequately address these deeper rooted issues plaguing youth work programming. To me, holding Clark University accountable would include the development of an annual training, requirement for clubs to justify their establishment (ensuring there is either a need or a want from youth within the community), and a reflective youth worker application.

I hope the readers of this work have come to understand the core values of a productive and effective youth worker training, the value of working collaboratively to develop specific curricula for the participants you are training, and the role positionality plays when engaging in youth work.

This project has taught me a lot about what research I am passionate about and am comfortable engaging in. Elizabeth and I teamed up to take on this task because we wanted to pursue a project that would have a direct impact on the student body by addressing an issue that we both recognized on our campus. This project was intriguing to us because it is something that can continue after we graduate. We hope that our work has sparked important conversations to take place and for the Clark Youth Worker Training Workshop to be expanded and continued in the following years. This work has taught me about the intricacies and complexities of putting together an authentic training, which has provided some context as to why there is no training currently. It takes significant time, energy, and commitment to arrange, but to not do so means valuing simplicity over genuine youth work.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Feedback Form

Post Training Feedback Form Questions:

1. What did you like about the training?
2. What did you not like?
3. How effective do you think the conversations surrounding the positionality were? (Scale 0 to 100 percent effective)
4. What is something that you think should have been included in this training?
5. Please write any additional feedback here.

Post Training Exit Survey Full Responses[3]

1. What did you like about the training?

Participant #	Response
1	Getting time to think about my positionality and lesson planning with PYD and Restorative Justice
2	I felt that all of the professionals were skilled presenters/facilitators with relevant experience in the city of Worcester. I appreciated the inclusion of both academic and experiential experts in the training. Another strength was the racial diversity of the presenters, which contributed to the discussions of intersectionality and positionality.
3	My favorite part was the second presentation
4	I really liked that it covered a wide berth of topics; I think Davis's presentation really illustrated how crucial and interconnected every facet of PYD is, and how we can incorporate it into all aspects of Youth Work.
5	I liked the "mandated reporter" section. I think it was very helpful.
6	I enjoyed the way that the training was set up: I think having separate presenters allowed the three hours to go by faster and keep me engaged. I also

[3] The survey was anonymous, participant numbers correlate to order in which the survey was filled out.

	appreciated getting lunch :))

2. What did you not like?

Participant #	Response
1	I wish there was more time to sit down and do serious reflection
2	Although I arrived late, I would have been open to a longer training as all of the topics presented felt important and worthy of more time. I also wish that the turnout had been better for this very important training.
3	I feel like the positionality portion was repetitive of things we do in class. That being said I understand it's important.
4	I didn't like the 2024 CYES praxis cohort turnout.
5	*No response*
6	This isn't about the training itself, but I wish more people came to the training, as I feel that those who showed up are not necessarily those who would most benefit from the training.

3. How effective do you think the conversations surrounding the positionality were? (Scale 0 to 100 percent effective)

Participant #	Responses
1	80
2	76
3	41
4	60
5	55
6	95

4. What is something that you think should have been included in this training?

Participant #	Response
1	More time to make statements
2	Should the training expand, I would love to see time spent on inclusion practices related to gender, family structure, disability, etc.
3	Situations concerning drug use in youth work
4	I think maybe conversations about Worcester populations and demographics could've been informative.
5	How to deescalate potentially harmful situation when working with youth
6	*No response*

5. Please write any additional feedback here.

Participant #	Response
1	N/A
2	This training should be mandatory for Clarkies participating in youth work!
3	Great work
4	You guys killed it!
5	*No response*
6	*No response*

Appendix B: Exit Pamphlet on Youth Work Resources

Youth Work Resources:

Please don't let the learning stop here, please continue to educate yourself and grow as a youth worker!

Courses

- **ID 240:** Fundamentals of Youth Work
- **ID 203: Youth Work:** Practice and Social Justice
- **CYES 222:** Universal Design for Learning

Books

1. ***Other People's Children*** by Lisa Delpit
2. ***Ethical Issues in Youth Work*** by Sarah Banks
3. ***Dilemmas in Youth Work and Youth Development Practice*** by Laurie Ross, Shane Capra, Lindsay Carpenter, Julia Hubbell, & Kathrin Walker (available in Goddard Library)
4. ***Culture and Power in the Classroom*** by Antonia Darder

Podcasts

- **Code Switch-** important conversations about the history of race in education
- **Frankly. Podcast** - student driven podcast on education and social issues
- **PYD Lab Podcast** - Focuses on Positive Youth Development Frameworks and student driven projects currently being done

Mandated Reporting Information

https://www.mass.gov/news/massachusetts-mandated-reporter-training

Free training modules based on the state of Massachusetts guidelines for mandated reporting. While working in a position of power with youth, you are a mandated reporter!