From Acknowledgment to Humility to Action: Developing a Clark University Youth Work Training Workshop

Praxis Project Thesis: 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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1. Abstract

The purpose of this project was to understand the barriers to professional development in youth work and to understand how participants apply the information and skills to their positions. Our goal was to develop effective training through the use of an interactive and reflective curriculum that focused on positionality, boundaries with students, and general strategies that can be applied to working with young people. To do this we recruited a team of experienced youth workers from various backgrounds and held planning meetings to discuss the curriculum of the training and observed the process. We then held the training with undergraduate students and captured observation field notes during the training. We also distributed an exit survey for participants to provide feedback. The results showed that the program had a lower turnout than expected, but that the workshop was effective in conveying information and skills important within the field, and that participants were engaged and considering how these themes impact their work. These results help to think critically about the importance of training in youth work settings, what it means for training to be effective, and the barriers to training. This type of work has a major importance in all areas of youth work, especially youth work that takes place at predominantly white institutions that work with young people from communities that they are not personally a part of.

2. Youth Work: Intention vs. Impact

Growing up, I was enrolled in numerous youth-based programs, most based at Yale University, which is located in my hometown. These programs usually targeted youth who were low-income first-generation students. I went to summer program after summer program, and most days you could find me in an afterschool program. I often enjoyed these programs. I was excited to be involved. The people who worked there were “cool” college students. I enjoyed the content that we were learning and the activities we were doing, and I felt really smart to be involved in these types of programs, especially when many were on college campuses. Looking back, even if I wasn't excited, I do not think that I would have much of a choice in the matter considering how much free childcare it provided for my parents.

However, while I enjoyed being a part of these programs, it was clear that there was a disconnect between the people who ran and worked there and the students who attended them. During one summer when I was about twelve, I remember waiting with my group leader to be picked up when the rest of my group had gone home. She was making conversation with me, and everything seemed normal until she started talking about another student in the group. She began to tell me how she was worried about her because her parents were “bad parents” and her sister was a teen mom who dropped out of high school. I was instantly uncomfortable. I was friends with the student that she was talking about, and while I knew some things about her family, it was an awkward position to hear things that my friend did not tell me herself and to witness such open judgment from an adult about a person I knew. I also have family who did not complete high school, so I also felt like she was making judgments about my family as well.

Reflecting on this interaction, I do not think the youth worker was coming in with poor intentions, but that did not change the impact that it had. There were assumptions that she made

about my community that she was working within as an outsider who probably has very different experiences than the students in the program. She did not seem to consider that the community that she was working in had relatively low graduation rates and high rates of teen pregnancy which can be directly correlated to the community having a large rate of people living in poverty. Whether she thought she was doing the right thing or not, she showed that she, in some way, looked down upon the students she was working with. She also did not seem to be aware that sharing personal information about a student with another student was extremely inappropriate as an adult working within the program.

I have come across many situations like this one in my time as a student in youth work programs and as someone who now works within similar programs. Generally, these types of interactions that potentially have negative impacts on students can be limited with better training. All people working with youth should be aware of the implications of what they are doing and what is generally acceptable and unacceptable to say to students. Raising more awareness about positionality and being respectful as an outsider of a community can lead to more effective youth work as a whole.

2.1 Our Research

Within our youth work experience, my co-researcher, Aine Sheehan, and I have both encountered situations that could have been made better with a higher level of awareness. At Clark University, many students have a genuine desire to do well in their work with youth, but their impact does not line up with their intention. While working in programming, Aine and I realized that there is a general lack of training before someone enters youth work at Clark University. This lack of training allows for youth workers to go into schools and programs within the Worcester community without receiving important background knowledge on the work or

becoming aware of their impact on students. There are also large differences in the makeup of Clark University students and the residents of Worcester. Clark University is a predominantly white institution (PWI) where many students come from financial privilege. Worcester has a much larger community of people of color and a much lower average income among residents. When entering these communities, Clark students should be aware of this and be more aware of how their position impacts the work that they are doing. A lack of cultural awareness has been seen among youth work done with Clark students and that issue needs to be addressed.

Recognizing this need, led us to create a program to mitigate the lack of youth work training. We decided to create a one-day workshop that would cover a broad range of important topics for youth workers such as basic boundaries and rules, strategies for effective practice, and extensive dialogue on positionality and cultural awareness. We hoped that providing the opportunity for more training would allow students to grow as youth workers and create better outcomes for the students they work with. Creating better-trained youth workers can allow for a better relationship between youth workers and young people and allow for positive impacts. The priorities of youth work should be to make sure students are supported and safe, and more training can better ensure that that happens. To develop this training, we recruited a team of experienced youth workers to work collaboratively to build a holistic training curriculum. The team developed the training around the themes of mandated reporting, positive youth development, restorative justice, and positionality.

Throughout our process of developing and conducting the training, I assessed the following research questions:

1. What are the barriers to successful professional development for students working in youth programming at Clark University?

2. How are participants of a youth work training workshop able to take the information gained from the training and apply it to their own youth work experiences?

Through learning from planning meetings, conversations during the training, and an exit survey after the training, we hoped to look deeply into what makes for a successful training where participants can gain perspective and understanding that will be utilized in practice as they work with young people.

3. Literature Review (Co-written with Aine Sheehan)

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.

3.1 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 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 turnover 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. 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 an outside training that is over a shorter period of time, so it can possibly reach more students due to less commitment being required, but focuses specifically on youth work and ways to be better prepared to work within the field. 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.

3.2 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 planned and executed. 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. The work discusses the importance of youth workers being professionally trained to assure 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 (Ross et al., 2011).

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 (Silliman et al., 2020). 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 outside 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 we hope that the training that we have developed is implemented more often for youth workers at Clark University.

3.3 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.

3.4 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 students 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 in youth work fields. 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.

4. Conceptual Framework

While looking further into this project, it is important to look at the lenses that are being used to conceptualize and grapple with the data that was collected. While aiming to better understand the outcomes of the project and the research questions that I proposed, I heavily based my observations on two concepts, acknowledgment and humility, and how they impact the path to tangible action.

4.1 Acknowledgment

Mama D. Ujuaje, in her work Moving Through Acknowledgement (2023) unpacked the different definitions and meanings behind the term acknowledgment. She states that one of the most commonly used definitions is “recognition of the state of things” (Ujuaje, 2023). Acknowledgment in social justice spaces is widely regarded as having a large importance to the

work. This definition is what will be used to define acknowledgment in the remainder of this paper. Thomas Scheff in his book, Bloody Revenge, claims that more awareness about human relationships and less defensiveness and denial would lead to more easily and effectively solved problems on multiple levels (2019, p. 131). Oftentimes, the first step of any progress is the acknowledgment of a problem or wrongdoing in order to more clearly see what can be done about it.

Within this grappling with acknowledgment, Ujuaje (2023) looks into acknowledgment in the context of social justice and justice for indigenous people within the United States. She brings up the concept of land acknowledgments and the potential that acknowledgment has for healing and justice. Though the importance of acknowledgment is widely agreed upon, there is also discourse on possible issues within acknowledgments. Ujuaje claims that within an acknowledgment specifically of wrongdoing, there is an expectation that there will be action and reconciliation to follow. When this does not occur, it can be insulting and show that there was not much behind the acknowledgment to begin with (2023). She also discusses the use of acknowledgments in order to resolve guilt among wrongdoers, but not to make actual change in certain cases. Many individuals will think that stopping at recognizing that there is something wrong is enough without taking any further steps (Ujuaje, 2023).

While a lot of times acknowledgment is brought up within conversations of reconciliation with past harms, usually of an atrocious scale, it is also used in smaller contexts that are more focused on a critique of a system or institution. Within this project, acknowledgment is being used in the context of a believed problem, the problem specifically being the lack of preparation among youth workers at Clark University and the potential harm that this can cause to young

people in the Worcester community. This project grappled with the acknowledgment of training gaps that exist currently, and what that recognition means in the larger scheme of things.

The acknowledgment that I am looking at throughout this project is the initial recognition that individuals showed around the lack of training within the youth work field, and then what was done with that acknowledgment. The concepts that are framing this work highlight acknowledgment as the first step in creating change but also grapple with the possibility of next steps not occurring, and the possible harms of that. These frameworks help us to better understand what this acknowledgment means and what may be preventing further steps beyond recognition. In this project, those steps would be seeking out the further education and professional development that has been provided in order to be a better youth worker for the young people you are working with.

4.2 Humility

Humility is a characteristic that is used in multiple ways, and that can have both negative and positive connotations. Morris et al. (2005), take a deeper look into what humility is and how it plays a role in effective leadership strategies. He notes that there have historically been many definitions of humility where it is regarded as being synonymous with low self-worth, but in most contexts, it is seen as virtuous (Morris, et al., 2005).

Ben-Ze'ev discusses what qualifies as being humble in his book, The Subtlety of Emotions (2001). In this, he claims that humility is a combination of an accurate self-appraisal and the belief that all people have worth and knowledge that should be respected (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001, p. 520). Therefore, being humble means being able to fully see yourself for your strengths and weaknesses. It is not negative self-talk or being overcome with doubt about your abilities, but it is the ability to see where you can grow and learn. Within this idea, an essential aspect of

humility is your respect and value for others. Humility requires being able to appreciate knowledge and experiences that others possess that you may not have at this point. Being able to see areas where you are able to improve and to know that you have much to learn, allows for exponential growth in any area. When a person approaches a situation with arrogance instead of humility, then they are creating a barrier to any future learning. This can stifle a person's success and personal growth on many levels, where a person who approaches everything as an opportunity to learn and gain more experience is never limited to what knowledge they have currently.

Humility plays a large role in the ability to be an effective leader. When being the person responsible for leading or facilitating a group, you are sometimes seen as this all-knowing figure and an authority in the space. This can make it easy to approach the space with arrogance thinking that your knowledge and ideas are the correct ones and that your job is to instill wisdom upon this group. However, the outcomes of this mindset are often grim because it creates an environment that is not conducive to success and prevents any positive growth from occurring. When you approach the space with humility and respect for all members of the group there is more potential to create an environment of mutual trust and openness allowing for learning and growth. Additionally, as a leader taking the time to look within yourself and seeing where you have to improve is essential for serving the group that you are leading to the best of your ability. Without reflection and adaptation, there is little to no chance of improvement and effectiveness.

DeMeulenaere et al. discuss the term "Socratic disposition" in Reflections From The Field: How Coaching Made Us Better Teachers (2013). Within this work, Socrative disposition is defined as "a stance of humility that recognizes that there is much to learn; this is the heart of wisdom"(DeMeulenaere et al., 2013, p. 126). In this book, this concept is dealt with in terms of

being a coach and having humility as a leader. As the main educators and coaches navigate leadership, it is found that showing humility through sacrifice, being critical and reflective of yourself, and showing respect for students and players had a significant impact on the outcomes that were observed (DeMeulenaere et al., 2013, p. 114-115).

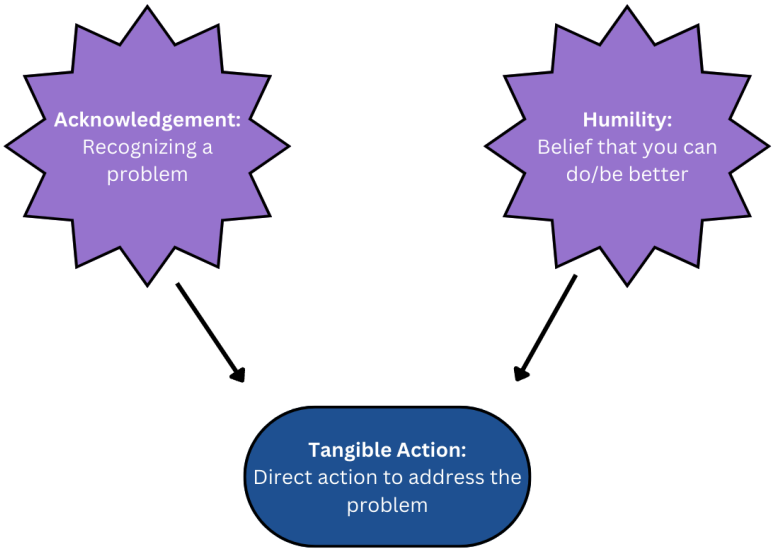
As a youth worker, you are often the leader of a space. It is the responsibility of the youth worker to serve the young people they are working with to the best of their ability. To do this there is a constant need to be reflective and to consistently acquire the knowledge and experience necessary to grow professionally. Humility is required in all aspects of youth work both in growing as a youth worker and in creating positive relationships and communities of trust, respect, and development with young people.

Within this work, humility is a central theme throughout as accepting that you need to learn more within your youth work role and seeking out that learning takes a large amount of humility and self-evaluation. The training that we developed was optional, so the people who attended did so on their own accord and made the sacrifice of their free time in order to gain new knowledge and skills as a youth worker. Humility plays a role in creating any type of tangible change because, on top of acknowledging a larger problem, there needs to be a sentiment that you personally can do more and be more. Similarly, the lack of a desire to learn is the antithesis of humility, and an example of arrogance, which could have been reflected in what we saw within the attendance of the training workshop.

4.3 Inspiring Action

The lens that I have used throughout the development of my work and the analysis of my data is centered around two central concepts, acknowledgment and humility, and how they work jointly in leading to action. In this framing, I am defining these two concepts as ones that are

reliant on each other in the process of creating change. Both of these ideas are aspects of one's own learning and growth, however, are insignificant on a broader scale if there is no backing with tangible action. As tangible action is regarded as the end goal within this framework, it too is a major concept within this work. The image below represents this system of acknowledgment and humility leading to tangible action that has been used to center the work that has been done.



This framework emphasizes the dynamic of acknowledgment and humility reliance on each other to lead to action being taken. Without acknowledgment, a problem would not be identified, and therefore having humility would not serve a purpose towards a larger end goal of solving a problem. Without humility, a problem can be acknowledged, but an individual will not be thinking critically about their actions or how they could personally improve to aid in achieving the larger end goal.

Tangible action could be considered as many things, but generally, it is an act that is done in an attempt to address a recognized problem. In the context of youth worker training, and the problem is a lack of training or a lack of preparedness to do youth work, the possible actions that

could be taken are individually seeking out training. Within seeking out training an action that counters the lack of preparedness for certain roles in youth work is gaining new knowledge in order to go back and apply it to your positions and responsibilities with youth. The seeking out of knowledge can itself be considered action but also can lead to further actions in the application of learning, which is a major goal of professional development in youth work.

5. Methods (Co-written with Aine Sheehan)

5.1 Methodology

Our research methods are rooted in participatory action research (PAR) (McIntyre, 2008). We used PAR as our main methodology during the planning stages of our work. Although PAR has been used in a wide variety of projects, 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 encouraging critical questioning. For example, who benefits from the research at hand? The main theme within PAR is 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 as 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 worker 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 had multiple ways of collecting information. We learned through the conversations during planning meetings where all participants were invited to share their experiences and values as a means to develop a training that is meaningful and effective. During these meetings we audio-recorded and took notes to look deeper within the interactions and information that participants shared.

We also used qualitative research methods such as surveys and observations during the training itself 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.

5.2 Epistemological Stance

In order for the workshop to have been relevant to the needs of the community, it was vital that we took into account the lived experiences of those who have experiences within youth work and the community. The team was made up of people from various identities and backgrounds so we wanted participants' knowledge to all 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 helped establish

an environment where no 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, and this was best done using a participatory research approach.

The use of qualitative research methods such as surveys and observation 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 a methodology that values the individual. We believe that through observation and surveying we were able to collect the most accurate and meaningful data that allowed us to understand the most important aspects of an effective youth worker training workshop.

5.3 Site

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 was 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 in 2020, the racial make-up of the Main South

neighborhood is 43.3% Hispanic or Latino, 32.9% white, 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. (Main South CDC, 2020). 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). The difference in the demographics between the Main South community and the Clark student body makes it essential for students working Worcester youth to undergo training in order to be adequately prepared to do this work.

5.4 Positionality

As I navigate this work as a researcher and a part of the team that was responsible for building the youth work training curriculum, it is critical that I examine and reflect on my position within the work and the community. Indeed, a central premise of our project is that our positionality as youth workers matters greatly. This is not only true for youth work, but also for my role as a researcher.

I am a white woman, which is most likely the largest aspect of my identity when considering how it impacts how I am perceived, and how I interact with the world around me. Within this identity, I have a lot of privilege, and a limited understanding of the communities that I am working with. My identity as a white woman is something that I have not had to think about as much in the past. I have always been surrounded by many white people and have been represented in every area of life. Society has been purposely structured to make it so that race is not something that I, as a white woman, do not have to interact with every day. Therefore, it is important that I am intentional about understanding how this aspect of my identity plays a role in larger dynamics to better understand the role that I have within communities.

I am a low-income, first-generation college student. This is something that I have had to navigate throughout growing up, but I was not always aware of how much I was impacted by it because I lived in and went to school in a space where most people shared that identity. I knew on a classification level that I was considered in poverty, but compared to people I was around I didn't necessarily feel poorer than others. It wasn't until entering college that I became more aware of how navigating spaces and life was impacted by these identities. I am also a queer woman which is an identity that I have been very aware of through my life. I have noticed how it has impacted the way that I am perceived and what communities that I can connect with and find a place within and how those identities can disconnect me from some spaces.

As a white person that helped develop a youth worker training that has cultural responsiveness as a central goal, I recognize that I do not possess the knowledge to create an effective curriculum using my own knowledge. Aine and I both understand that in developing a training program that is accurate, constructive, and well-received, we needed to collaborate with others who were more qualified to talk about the topic both in terms of identity and experience level as a youth worker. This is why we created a team that is made up of people from different racial and cultural identities and experiences in youth work in order to plan and conduct this training. We also made sure to keep our positions in mind while developing the training, and remained aware of the need to make sure that the information that we were providing was effective, accurate, and not speaking for or over communities that we were not a part of.

5.5 Participants

Our participants include 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 assure that a

holistic training is developed. It is 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 each have a long background in youth work. Johnson[1] 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 training and has been involved in numerous youth work projects in Worcester. Davis is a director of a community-based department at Clark 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, it appeared as though only students who are actively engaged 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

[1] All included names of trainers and participants are pseudonyms.

note that although Clark University is a predominantly white university, only two out of the eight participants identified as white.

5.6 Data Collection

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 was used asked questions about the participants' experience 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 took notes of the central themes. This analysis guided our curriculum and how we conducted the training workshop, so this data collection and analysis 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.

5.7 Data Analysis

Within my data analysis, I used a lens of acknowledgment and humility to better understand the research questions proposed. To better understand the possible barriers that exist to professional development in youth work, I unpacked transcripts from the planning meetings, observations about the process of publicizing, and observations about the individuals who attended the training. Through this, I was able to think more about the current situation with professional development in youth work, particularly in this setting, and think about what the factors were that caused the group of students that did attend to decide to do so. By thinking

about the training gaps that exist already based on experiences that our trainers have had with getting youth workers into these training spaces I was able to reflect on the possibilities for why youth work training does not reach many of those who need it. By thinking critically about the students who did attend, I was able to also consider what the differences were between those who chose to attend optional training and those who decided not to, leading to possible conclusions being made on the barriers that exist.

While analyzing the transcripts from the training, fieldnotes, and feedback form results, I looked for signs of participants applying topics to their own individual youth work experiences. In doing this, I was able to better understand how participants were learning within this space and how acknowledging the need for training and having the humility to recognize areas where they can grow impacted how the training was received and used. Within the connections to participants' own experiences, we can see both humility through reflection and acknowledgment of the need for further professional development. Some signs of the learned skills and ideas being applied to the context of each participant's work are sharing connections to youth work experiences, asking questions that are specific to their situations, and showing active engagement in activities that push participants to be reflective of their own experiences and positions. I was also able to look at the results of the feedback forms to understand the needs and wants of participants. Within the feedback, I looked at ways that participants took in the information during this workshop, and how some participants were drawn to learn more about specific areas of youth work practice.

6. Findings

6.1 Observations of Developing and Hosting a Youth Work Training

Aine and I had noticed a severe lack of preparation in youth workers at Clark University and wanted to address this problem in some tangible way. We had heard many complaints and critiques of the current system that just allowed students to go in and work with young people without any training beforehand. We decided to develop a training workshop in order to directly fill the need for more professional development in the field. We planned to establish a team to help develop a workshop that targeted Clark University students and allowed them to gain basic skills and knowledge that are important to know when working with youth. We believed that if we provided a training opportunity that was effective in practice and developed and taught by experienced youth work professionals, then the lack of training would be mitigated in at least some capacity.

In recruiting our team of youth workers, Aine and I reached out to several individuals who we knew had a significant background in youth work and ties to the Worcester community. We ended up with a team of three youth workers who were also faculty at Clark University. These three participants have many years of youth work experience and community engagement experience. They also already have relationships with many students at Clark University, which was not something we were necessarily looking for, but something that could be helpful in this type of work.

We were eager to meet and begin working on this project. Initially, our plan was to all meet together, weekly, for four weeks. We quickly found out that when you are working with a group that is very involved in their work and their communities, it shows in their schedule. We struggled with finding any time when all five of us could meet. We decided that if we were going

to be able to move forward with enough time to carry out the training, we would have to settle for a meeting when the most people were available, and then meet with whoever could not make it separately.

Our first meeting was with Johnson and Davis. We decided that in this meeting, we would start by getting to know each other better and to understand everyone's relationship with youth work. We then went into discussion questions about the need for training within youth work and what training has been present within their youth work experience. We asked the following three discussion questions:

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?

From these questions, arose a conversation about how common it is for youth workers to never have experienced training and to just be thrown in with young people. Both trainers had experienced no trainer in their positions until there was professional development. Johnson talked about how this lack and its impacts are what inspired one of her projects to develop a training program that was open to youth workers in Worcester. This program was a part of the inspiration behind our work. We essentially had the same goal as that training program, but wanted to host a shorter training with just the basics in hopes that more people would get trained if there was less commitment required.

We also discussed what types of problems that lack of preparation causes. Davis commented,

> 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 than like 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. (Planning Meeting Recording, October 16, 2023)

While meeting with Lewis to go over these discussion topics she also talked about the need to highlight the weight of youth work through 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 you know having knowing that there is training that um that there are things you need to learn to do it not just anyone can do it and it's not like you wake up one day and are like you're like I'm going to go play with kids. (Planning Meeting Recording, November 15, 2023)

Through this we also talked about how many factors influence youth work and how important the work is, and that is not always communicated by the lack of prerequisites that exist to enter these positions.

The other major themes of this meeting were the need for identity to be centered in the training that is developed and how that would lead to more effective practice. Johnson brought this up and highlighted the importance of these conversations about power and identity as Clark students enter the Worcester community. She talked about her own experience as someone who grew up in Worcester and how even with that background she needs to be aware of the power dynamic of a space when she is doing youth work. Davis seconded that idea and talked about how this could be done through reflective practices throughout the training.

This then led into further ideas about what makes for effective or ineffective training. Johnson talked about the importance of who is leading the training, and what experiences they

have. She mentioned what trainers were effective in leading the program that she developed and stated that,

> Lived experience as a youth worker is awesome if they have ya know that in their kind of repertoire. We've had folks that have been um...like executive directors of youth work agencies that have been trainers for us that are great connections but weren't necessarily great trainers because they have ya know...they know what's needed but didn't necessarily have the experience of providing actual like front line youth work to be able to draw reference. (Planning Meeting Recording, October 16, 2023)

This theme of learning and teaching through lived experiences came up often and became something we wanted to highlight in our curriculum. Lewis also brought up how lived experience and academic learning work are both valuable forms of knowledge, but utilizing both are key in successful youth work. From conversations in this session we also wanted to ensure that the training was interactive and taught in multiple styles to make it as engaging as possible.

A couple weeks later, we moved onto scheduling a second meeting. This time there was no overlap at all in the times that the trainers could meet. We made the decision that we would hold three individual meetings in order to continue moving forward with the project. In this meeting we had a list of topics that we were interested in potentially covering and went over what topics the trainers think should be included. The original list of possible topics was:

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

We met with Davis first, and in this conversation some ideas that she brought up on things that she thought should be covered were mandated reporting, culturally responsive programming, restorative justice, trauma informed learning, and positive youth development. She talked about how important it is for curriculum to be both culturally appropriate and reinforce positive youth development:

> …positive youth development framework training, so like just understanding like what youth work is and like not all youth work is positive youth development, and I think that also intertwines with like the curriculum, so like a lot of clubs at Clark for instance make their own curriculum, um and as far as I know, no student at Clark is a curriculum expert… but really understanding the framework of a positive youth development program so like, and how monitoring and evaluation literally like works within that so like you want youth to walk away with positive outcomes and like what does that mean? What are positive outcomes? (Planning Meeting Recording, November 15, 2023).

Davis then went on to say that she would be comfortable running a workshop on positive youth development, and when we asked if there were anything else she would like to take on, she talked about having experience running training on restorative justice practices.

When meeting with Lewis about the topics that should be included she emphasized the importance of positive youth development frameworks being taught in the workshop. She also talked about using the dilemma-based role play approach within the training to do some concrete skill building and to be able to unpack the topics in the conversations that follow.

We could unfortunately not meet with Johnson to go over these topics due to scheduling issues, so we drafted a tentative training curriculum based on what the trainers have said in our meetings. We decided to cover the following in our training:

1. Mandated reporting
2. Positive youth development
3. Restorative Justice
4. Positionality

We then had a third meeting with all of the participants to go over the schedule and figure out definitively who was going to cover what topics. We decided that, based on what trainers had the most experience and knowledge in, that Johnson would cover mandated reporting, Davis would cover positive youth development and restorative justice, and Lewis would cover positionality. We had example lesson plans for each topic that the trainers could use as a guide, but left the final decision on what to include up to them.

After we had a solid plan, it was around a month before the training and we began to spread the word about the event. To publicize the event we posted a flier on all of our personal social media platforms, and contacted faculty that we thought would have good networks to share the information with. The flier was sent out to every current Community, Youth, and Education Studies major and minor, and every student enrolled in the Master's of Teaching program. We had our peers share the information to their networks as well. The information seemed to travel pretty well. People were talking about it and saying that they would be there, as well as reposting it on social media.

The day of the training arrived and we were full of nerves, but also excitement. We got there extra early to set up the room, the snacks, and all of our materials. We did not know exactly what to expect, but we had high hopes. It reached the start time of the training, and people are slowly trickling in. We reached a few minutes later, and we saw that we still had a smaller sized group, made up of 8 participants. We are pleased to see the people took the time out of their day

to attend this training, but we are a little disappointed and confused at the absence of others due to all of the affirmation that we had received about the training. We had a total of 8 students in attendance at the training.

We started the training off with an agenda for the day and introductions of our trainers and ourselves. Johnson then goes into her presentation on mandated reporting. The room is quiet and participants seem to be taking in the information and taking notes. Johnson goes over types of abuse and neglect you are responsible for reporting, what the red flags are to look out for, and how to go about reporting. There is then a breakout discussion where Johnson puts up scenarios on the board and in small groups, participants are supposed to discuss what course of action to take. Participants then shared out and the group discussed responses.

Then the training moved on to Davis's workshop on positive youth development. She opened the session up with having participants reflect on their own experiences with positive youth development, what that looked like, and if it was effective. Participants did not hesitate to share and covered a range of different examples and perceptions. Adrian shared:

> When I think about youth development...in my personal experience...I notice...the ways in which education about health and sex and drug use can really benefit the youth both in the areas of education and health and well being but also in confidence, bodily autonomy, being able to build their own skills. (Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024)

Emily shared:

> I feel like I've been in a bunch of youth work scenarios and I find that like identity based or situations where kids opt into the youth work is where I've seen the most success and positive youth development, whereas like...opposed to somewhere where kids are required to be here, have to be here for child care reasons and such...that seems to have a

> little bit more of resistance so but those are also really important so I in my future hope to find a way to balance that out and find positive youth development in very structured, required necessity programs. (Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024)

This comment allowed for further discussion within how to implement positive youth development frameworks in different types of programming where young people are coming from different spaces and mindsets about the work being done. The trainer then went into more ideas and conversations about how to create a space where positive youth development is being done. Things like community agreements, the set up of the classroom, getting to know each other, and showing students respect. Within this arises a conversation around deficit-based lenses, and Emily aims to explain what it means to not use this lens it by stating it means:

> giving young people skills, voice, and opportunity to contribute to society because their knowledge is important rather than seeing them as almost like a liability...like oh we need to help them, we need to do this for them...versus like no they can actually do this for themselves. (Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024)

Trainer one talks more about that and how positive youth development is about giving young people tools and spaces to grow and not trying to "save them" in any way. She also goes over what this means within how you interact with youth and create positive relationships with them.

Davis then transitions into how to implement positive youth development in a curriculum. Participants are tasked to think about their current positions and draft a lesson plan that includes positive youth development, and works to achieve some goal through that framework. The participants quietly worked on their plans, and then some shared about their experiences. She then unpacks some of the plans, discusses different strategies, and moves on to

the next topic, restorative justice. She goes over definitions of what restorative justice is and how it is used and discusses this with the group. This dialogue occurs:

> **Emily:** "I find it really difficult when you're in structured program that maybe doesn't like have the same values as you for example the [Organization] I've worked at...its like they have expectations so I wonder if you have any advice for individual level of restorative justice when structural it tends to be like punish based...how you would go about that?"
>
> **Davis:** That is really hard. I would say handling how Adrian handled it...if you yourself, your team has autonomy to build relationships then use those relationships to minimize...I mean for me it's all about deescalating right? Because things can get escalated very quickly. How are you going to deescalate the situation based on the relationship you have with these young people already? Maybe Adrian is the right person to talk to this young person, but Michael is the right person to talk to the person having a conflict with them. And so I think it's a lot of intuition and a lot of relationship building to kind of navigate that. Unfortunately it's true many of you are going to end up becoming public school educators, our whole public school system doesn't really incorporate restorative practice so how can you..not yet... how can you be the educator that maintains that within your classroom, right? (Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024)

This conversation was one example of a few of its kind where participants were able to ask for advice and clarification specific to their work and wonderings due to the structure and community built within the question. The smaller scale of the group allowed for a lot of in depth feedback, questions, and ideas to be shared, where it may have been more difficult in larger

settings. The discussion on restorative justice occurs for a little longer and then the session is handed off to Lewis.

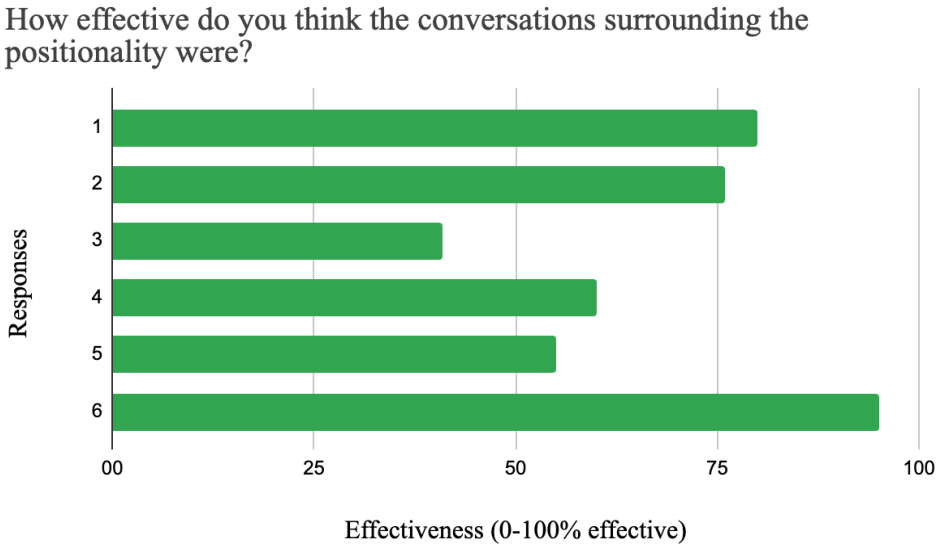
Lewis opens the conversation by asking for everyone's initial ideas of the word positionality. People share and talk a lot about identities, and shared or not shared experiences. Adrian defines positionality as, "the experiences, socio-political perspectives, and the ways to use and navigate a space"(Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024). Lewis asks participants to write down what image comes to mind when they hear certain titles, like doctor, teacher, youth worker, and then reflect on some of their initial reactions. Then all of the participants are prompted to take some individual reflection and writing time to draft a statement about their own positionality and its impact. The participants take the time to do this and write quietly. Due to the overall timing and flow of the training, the participants were not given as much time to do this work as we had originally intended. Within this section of the training and this activity, limited data was collected due to the quiet, reflective, and individual nature of the activity. We wanted to give participants time on their own to think deeply and write what they were called to.

After about ten minutes, Lewis asks about the process. Participants share that this time gave them an opportunity to reconsider their identities and aspects that they aren't always aware of. Some also talk about how they took the time to consider where that identity stems from. Given who the participants of the training were and their academic background, this activity was most likely familiar to them. Many of the participants are in majors where a portion of the coursework calls for students to think and write about their positions and identities. In the design of the program, we were aiming to keep these conversations and activities beginner friendly for participants who may have never been exposed to these conversations, but we incorrectly assumed who our audience would be. If we had known that these would be our participants, we

could have dug a little deeper into thinking about identity and looked at it from a different angle. However, our participants still engaged and participated in the activity, and indicated that they had gotten something from the portion of the workshop. Lewis thanks everyone for their participation and the training is concluded.

Finally, we put up a link to a feedback form that we ask all participants to complete. We got 6 out of 8 responses, and they gave a large variety of feedback. We got a lot of positive feedback, especially about the trainers, their expertise, and the content of the training. Three participants mentioned enjoying the positive youth development session. One of them stated that they "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". Others also commented on the mandated reporter training being helpful and that they enjoyed the setup of the event.

When asked what participants did not like, one person mentioned that they would have liked for the training to be longer to cover more, and another person mentioned that they wish there was more time for reflection. Two participants mentioned that they wish the turnout had been better.



On the feedback form we also asked, “How effective do you think the conversations surrounding the positionality were?” and had participants use a sliding scale of 0 to 100% effective. The table above displays the responses to this question.

There was a very wide range of responses, but the average was 68%. For the participants that did attend, the session may have been repetitive to what they may have already heard. We had originally structured the training to be more beginner friendly, so that it was accessible to students with all academic backgrounds. If we had anticipated this we could have formatted this portion of the workshop differently in a way that engaged with more complex topics and looked further into how positions play a role in specific youth work situations. The table below is the feedback that we received from one of the survey questions about what could have been included.

What is something that you think should have been included in this training?
More time to make statements
Should the training expand, I would love to see time spent on inclusion practices related to gender, family structure, disability, etc.
Situations concerning drug use in youth work
I think maybe conversations about Worcester populations and demographics could’ve been informative.
How to deescalate potentially harmful situation when working with youth

This information is helpful in thinking about future training and what could be done differently in order to make it more effective. Most responses said something about a particular area of the training that could have been expanded or added to, and that can be helpful in determining the needs of youth workers in professional development.

Overall, I think that the training was a success for those who attended. We got a lot of positive feedback, both on the form, and in person following the event. In the additional feedback section of the form one participant stated that they think that the training should be made mandatory for all youth workers at Clark University, and others said affirming things like "Great work" and "You guys killed it!". It is important to note that many of the participants were also our peers, so some of the positive feedback could have also been peers being supportive. However, many people seemed to get something positive out of it and enjoyed the conversations and activities that took place. There is a lot to unpack between the development of the training, the turnout, and the implementation, but the training seemed effective in meeting the goal of providing some basic understanding and practical skills that could be applied to the youth work that participants are doing.

6.2 Acknowledgment vs Attendance

During the development stages of our project we talked with numerous peers that are involved in youth work spaces. I estimate that we individually spoke with close to 20 individuals. When we brought up that we were considering a project that addressed the lack of training that is provided prior to entering youth work spaces at Clark University, we were consistently met with similar responses of people expressing how they wish there had been more training available to them. Leaders of clubs at Clark University that work with young people talked about how important this was and how they hoped that all of the members of their clubs would go and get trained. In a lot of conversations, examples of problems that have occurred while working with young people that could have been mitigated with better training came up, and many of these examples had to do with youth workers saying culturally insensitive out of touch comments to youth that they were interacting with. They gave specific instances where

they heard people that work with youth talk negatively about the Worcester community or use a tone of saviorism within these conversations.

In our meetings with our trainers, who all have involvement with Clark students that are involved in youth work in some capacity, we were also met with responses about how much need there is for professional development before students work directly with children. In a meeting with Lewis, she stated,

> I don't really think I had any real professional development to be a youth worker. When a lot of times when I was in the roles that I was in, it was more like having, helping young people kind of do community assessments, so I know how to do community assessments, but then it's like how do you do that with youth? And so that was a big one for me. (Planning Meeting Recording, November 15, 2023).

This is a common experience for many youth workers. Many that work with young people start because they have an interest in something that may be adjacent to youth work, but do not have a background in youth work. Then, as the individual becomes more involved within the youth work field, they still do not encounter training.

In a meeting with Davis, she talked about how there is a major problem within untrained student club leaders being responsible for training and leading other students within the club, and therefore not being able to deliver accurate and effective information and skills that are crucial while working within youth work. In this meeting she comments,

> Yeah I'm the advisor for [Club] and I would like them to be a part of this as well somehow. This year I came in on a Saturday and did a training for them because last year I just had heard so many like negative things about it and I would go so far as to say like the leaders of that club...like you said they had no training and they are the ones who

> have been training people and that's like not their fault, they realize that they need help so I'm glad that they asked for it, but like they didn't have a concept of even what positive youth development was. (Planning Meeting Recording, November 15, 2023)

In work as important and involved as youth work, there is the opportunity to do so much, but this means that there is also an opportunity to do great harm if there is a lack of knowledge or understanding around the situation and how to interact with young people. Within Clark University clubs this is very often the case, and club leaders do their best to provide some important information, but there are many instances where they are not qualified to be the person responsible for finding and delivering that information.

On every occasion that we brought up the training to someone that had been involved in youth work, the individual was aware that this was a problem. There was not a single time where someone showed any bit of surprise that this was a project that was occurring or a need that should be met. This sentiment and these conversations demonstrated acknowledgment from youth workers that there is an issue within the lack of training for individuals that work with youth. They can recognize the problem at hand, and as we know, that is an essential first step in addressing the problem. Youth workers are not in the dark about the lack of preparedness in the field and seemed like they acknowledged the need for some change in this dynamic. This sentiment gave us a lot of hope and reassurance that this project was important and worth developing.

Then the day of the training arrives. We are met with a surprisingly low number of participants. We were confused at why almost all of the individuals that said that they would like to see more training exist before entering youth work spaces did not attend this workshop. We were providing the professional development opportunity that was backed by so many

individuals and clubs, but this opportunity did get utilized. We sent out information on the workshops to 5 major Clark University youth work clubs, most of which responded very enthusiastically, and only students from one of those clubs attended.

We believed that the lack of training was because training was not available to youth workers, and that this could be mitigated with the implementation of a training program at Clark University, but due to attendance, this program did not reach enough students to do this. If youth workers at Clark University unanimously acknowledge the need for training and professional development as a youth worker, then why did most not attend? Why was there overwhelming support for the workshop, and dozens of shares on social media, if those sharing and supporting did not plan to actually show up?

A major possibility of why the turnout is so low, is that while people are willing to say that there is a need for more training and education, many do not think that it is them personally that does not have enough knowledge and experience to be working with young people. It is also difficult to admit that you personally may be working with young people when you are not fully equipped and causing potential harm. When youth work is a major part of what you do, admitting that you have gaps in your skill sets may feel like admitting weakness or wrongdoing, when the truth is that everyone can benefit from professional development, and admitting that you can grow in areas is not inherently a negative thing. Within what we know about humility, it is a virtue to be able to see where you need improvement and to value the other ideas and knowledge.

Within the participants of the training, 6 out of 8 were either Community, Youth, and Education Studies majors or a minor in education. This was particularly interesting, as within the development of the training we were planning on most participants being students who were

newer to youth work or educational spaces and that were seeking out training because of that lack of experience. We had catered a lot of our curriculum to students that did not have an academic background in education because of this. Due to this observation, I was called to think about the questions: What causes certain people to be more likely to seek out training? Why were these students more likely to attend an optional training?

When unpacking these questions I was reminded of the Dunning-Kruger effect, which is a commonly talked about theory that claims that the more educated you are on a subject, the more you are aware of everything that you still have to learn, where if you know very little you are more likely to believe that you have less to learn than you do (Dunning, 2011). This has the potential to connect to the fact that most of our participants had an academic background in education and also had a lot of experience working with young people. Within the education aligned academic programs at Clark University, there is often a push for self-reflection, which may have caused increased awareness and humility within these particular students. This is hard to understand fully without further conversations with these students, but it is a possible factor that could have led to their attendance. Considering this, these students may have been more likely to attend because they are familiar with all that there is to learn within youth work and how important constantly learning and growing as a youth worker is. The opposite could have also been said for some students that had less experience and knowledge around youth work. These students may have assumed that if they think that they are doing well within their positions, that they are not in need of training or further growth. It should also be noted that while talking to youth workers about the need for training, they very often brought up examples of others being ill prepared or doing harm in the spaces they worked within. It was rare to hear a person giving examples of how they personally could have done something wrong due to a lack

of preparedness. Some youth workers briefly mentioned that they felt like they would have benefited from more training so they did not need to figure it out as they started, but did not give concrete examples of ways that they needed further training or what they could be doing due to the lack of training provided.

A major goal of the training was to address the dynamic of mostly white students working within schools and communities that are mostly young people of color, and how this may impact the dynamics of the spaces that they are working within. This portion of the training was highlighted in the development and advertising of the event. However, out of the 8 students that attended, there were only 2 white students present. We were operating under the assumption that since we were operating at a PWI, our group of participants would reflect that. This led me to think more in depth about why this was. One possibility ties back to the idea that attending this training may feel like you are admitting to doing something wrong. Accepting that you should attend a training that centers the idea of positionality, may bring up feelings of defensiveness. It is hard for many to accept that, as a white person, they may be complacent in harmful systems or that they may have done something that may have been racist, especially when talking about working with kids. White fragility is something that is present in all white people as there is an impulse to be defensive and feel hurt when someone points out behaviors or systems that you are a part of that may be harmful (DiAngelo, 2016). Therefore seeking out cultural responsiveness training and training on positionality may be something that a lot of white people are not willing to admit that they need, even though the need to grow and learn as white people, especially white people working with young people of color, is important and beneficial for anyone at any stage of learning. However, due to the size of the group, it is also

very possible that this was coincidence, and it would not be safe to use this data to make significant claims.

These ideas all tie back to one major fact: acknowledging a problem is a lot easier than doing something about it. People say things everyday, and may fully believe that what they are saying is correct, and not go further than that. Most of the individuals that we talked to leading up to the training probably did fully think that what we were doing was important, but did not have the intention to actually attend the training, either because they did not think that they needed to or because they simply did not want to. When it comes to certain topics, many people often think that saying something in support of something is enough. Acknowledgment is often seen as action enough and used to absolve guilt (Ujuaje, 2023). Therefore a possible barrier in the attendance of the training could relate back to the idea that it takes more than acknowledging a problem to do something, it also takes great humility to know that it is your job to be and do better. In this case, that would be learning and seeking out training in order to do and be better for the young people that you are choosing to work with.

Our initial evaluation of the lack of training within the field did not fully incorporate this idea, and therefore the plan that we derived did not address the problem in the most effective way. Aine and I saw a lack of preparedness in the youth work field, and drew the conclusion that the reason was that this training did not exist. However, we did not consider the fact that when it does exist, individuals may not be compelled to attend. In our recruitment, we should have done more reflection and had more conversations with youth workers about what would call them to attend. We could have also done further recruiting that emphasized that everyone can benefit from this training, not just people who are currently doing something wrong. Doing this, we could have reached people that were in a more defensive headspace or that may have felt like

they did not need training. This could have made up for the lack of humility that may have been present among youth workers that prevented a larger scale of attendance for the workshop.

6.3 Other Potential Barriers

While many students may have made the active decision that they did not want to attend the training, there are also many barriers that may have prevented some from attending. This training was on a normal Sunday from 12pm to 3pm, and while this is not during traditional working hours, many students may have jobs that overlap with this time slot that prevented them from attending the workshop. There are also many other commitments that students make over the weekends such as club events, meetings, and involvement in athletics. This showed up within our training as some students had to arrive late or leave a little bit early to make it to their other engagements. Providing only one time slot of that duration on one day could have potentially caused many students to not be able to make it to the training. It brings me to wonder about if we did other training days and times as options, or did more research into when students would be the most available, would the turnout change?

There is also a barrier of the length of the training not being appealing to some. Many people may look at a 3-hour long training on a Sunday morning and not necessarily be called to join in. I would like to think that if I were in the position of youth workers deciding whether or not to attend, that I ultimately would choose to, but I cannot say that I would be tempted to avoid sitting in a classroom that long during my free time. Many students do not have ample free time, and when they do, they may not want to use it in this way, especially without further incentive.

The lack of incentive could have also played a role in the lack of participants present at the training. We offered lunch since the training was long and ran during a typical lunch time, but it could have been helpful to offer something in addition to that. It could have possibly been

beneficial to offer some type of "thank you for attending" gift or even a certificate of completion that youth workers could put on their resume and have something to show for the training. This could have drawn more people to consider being a participant of the training.

6.4 Learning through sharing experiences

A major way that participants were able to demonstrate engagement with the material was to connect it to their own lived experiences. This was highlighted throughout the training as our trainers were sure to ask participants questions that made them consider their own personal experiences. By doing this, the material may have been received more tangibly and less abstract. Connecting learning to things that the participants are already familiar with, may help them conceptualize the information in a way that makes sense for them, and therefore are able to utilize it in future youth work experiences. Johnson did this within the idea of safety. When she asked what made participants safe and secure as a child, Riley responded:

> I thought a little bit about how I feel like having plans that I made with my parents for what to do in unsafe situations made me feel safe, like we talked about how crossing the street is dangerous and playing by yourself is dangerous and being out at night is dangerous, and here's what to do to keep yourself safe, and like having that information made me feel safer. (Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024)

This participant connected the feeling of safety and security with having a plan and being aware of potential dangers. By using this idea, they can think about how they can provide this within an environment with young people. This conversation took place during the mandated reporting section of the training. Pushing participants to consider themselves as young people can push them to put themselves in the child's position and think about what may cause a child to feel unsafe. Putting yourself in the child's shoes may also help you get a better sense of why this

training is so real and important. Connecting the work back to yourself can really cause you to think deeply about the information and then absorb more of it.

Sharing experiences within a learning setting can also be beneficial to all participants as giving examples of when the information can be used and how to help other students understand the material and how to use it more clearly. Within the training there were many instances of students using their own experiences in order to interact with what the trainers were teaching. One example of this is when Davis was talking about the term positive youth development, and asked what that term made people think of. Adrian responded:

> When I think about youth development, in my personal experience, I notice the ways in which education about health and sex and drug use can really benefit the youth both in the areas of education and health and well being but also in confidence, bodily autonomy, being able to build their own skills.

Adrian in this section of the training made a direct connection between the material and work that they have encountered. They showed verbally the way that they interpreted and interacted with the ideas that were being discussed. This connection between health education around sex and drugs and student autonomy is an example of development. This connection may not have been as obvious in other participants' minds, and now they can think more about how positive youth development works in that context and apply it to their own work. Now that this is a connection that is made, other participants may be pushed to think further about how health education and autonomy play a role in their youth work spaces, whether these conversations are currently taking place or not. While this idea was not something we originally made a part of the curriculum, we wanted this to be a space where individuals could share their own experiences and knowledge and others could take that and use it in their practice. These connections with the

material to outside topics is important in expanding the body of knowledge that we can create through professional development for youth workers.

In the same conversation, Emily stated,

> I feel like I've been in a bunch of youth work scenarios and I find that like identity based or situations where kids opt into the youth work is where I've seen the most success and positive youth development, whereas like...opposed to somewhere where kids are required to be here, have to be here for child care reasons and such...that seems to have a little bit more of resistance so but those are also really important so I in my future hope to find a way to balance that out and find positive youth development in very structured, required necessity programs. (Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024)

This connection that Emily shared shows that she is interested in learning more about what the presenter is teaching about. She is connecting her own work with the teachings of the workshop and indicating through this, that she is thinking about how to implement the ideas further. In sharing this statement she is providing the opportunity to dig further into the topic and provide real strategies for applying what is being taught. In the conversation that follows Davis goes into the strategies that can be used in these situations, such as implementing the frameworks in smaller ways and within how you conduct the space so that young people feel more compelled to participate and be a part of the work that is being done.

The conversations that were had in this training showed that individuals were thinking in depth about their own experiences and sharing experiences so that others could learn from them. However, in the development of the curriculum, I believe that timing caused a lot of conversations to be cut short. Our trainers were really successful in asking follow ups that allowed participants to dig deeper into their own experiences and think of ways that they could

incorporate these ideas, however there were often times where these conversations were rushed because we did not have the adequate time to unpack the topics. All of the information that was presented could be talked about for hours, but we wanted to keep the training to three hours over one day to make it more accessible and compelling to a wider audience. Therefore, we had to go at a quick and steady pace and could not get as far in conversation as we would have liked to in some cases. Since the attendance of the training was low regardless, it is possible that a longer, more in depth training could have been a good option to allow better engagement with the material.

When people share their own thoughts, connections, and ideas, they may not realize how much that can help other people better understand the material or apply it to their own positions. Within a professional development setting, one of the biggest benefits is the networking and learning from what other people have experienced, so that you have a better understanding of how to navigate that experience before even encountering it. This makes the skills taught within the training even more tangible and allows for more participants to be able to use them in a way that can actively benefit them and the students that they work with. Within our training, our participants were very willing to share and connect ideas with their own experiences both in life and in youth work settings. When the trainers asked questions, there was almost always someone that would not hesitate to share their ideas. This ultimately led to the training being a space for very productive learning and reflection.

6.5 The Presence of Specific and Meaningful Questions

One action that can be used to tell if participants are actively engaged and thinking about the information in the context of their own work is to look at if they are asking questions that are personal to them and consider how the information ties into their personal positions. Within the

training there were a few times, especially during the positive youth development section, that participants were asking very specific questions on how to use the frameworks in their current positions. During a conversation about this framework and how to incorporate it through lesson planning, the following exchange occurred:

> **Lily:** I'm a tutor right now and a lot of the time, the kids they don't want to be there because it's more like their parents wanted them to go so sometimes it makes it really difficult for them to be able to…
>
> **Davis:** You're struggling with the academic structure...interesting yeah...that's also tough. I think again if we try to think about it before you even walk in, what are some of the activities even if the tutoring is the main activity of the experience. Ya know how can you do a little intro or closing or some processing time to add those elements possibly, but thank you. (Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024)

Lily, in this scenario, is asking for feedback and ideas on what to do in their specific situation. By doing this, they are showing that they are thinking about how they can implement the framework and use the skills provided in the training in their youth work position. This shows that the step between training and using the skills learned in your work is there in this case. We are not able to know truly if that implementation was done, but we can see in this interaction that they are considering how that would look within their specific context of youth work, and are getting feedback on how to navigate their situation. A similar example was seen in the same conversation between Adrian and Davis:

> **Adrian:** Well I was talking to Lily about how I recently been like inheriting my program because my advisor had to leave so I am now in charge of programing and making sure people are paid on time [inaudible] which is something I never had to do in this

program...which is really unfortunate but they're the responsibilities I had to take on like within a couple days.

Davis: So you're overseeing the youth workers essentially?

Adrian: Yes...so I've really struggled to keep everything together and also prioritize having time with [inaudible]...so one of the things I'm thinking about or one of the things I could try is still being with the youth workers that I have...giving them more training...more preparedness...increasing their confidence when it comes to facilitation skills for example...in hopes that...that would help them maintain a sense of autonomy and somewhat control over their youth program...Also hoping to just build longer term systems that allow the youth workers to feel more secure in their work...but I also feel like having inherited all the parts of this program I think that I am looking to streamline and re-evaluate and prioritize to ensure that youth are able to access the most opportunities possible when entering the space that they can spend as much time with me and other advisors as possible so a lot of kind of systemic questions and in relation to how the structure of the program could better emphasize these seven Cs even in the face of everything.

Davis: I think what's important to call out here is positive youth development is not easy necessary to always implement...I keep saying it starts before you walk into the classroom with young people and Adrian you're really describing right now like you're talking about professional development, you're talking about curriculum, you're talking about assessment, I heard that word come out of your mouth, there is a lot of thought that goes into creating successful youth programming before the programming starts, right? I do think that I also like to give one another...give yourself grace in these spaces too

> because at the end of the day relationships are really the thing I think that make youth development different from school, right? That sounds like a really important part of these programs but give yourself time and we're here to support you and we're here to support you and if you ever have any questions but take it one step at a time. You are definitely highlighting the fact that this is not necessarily easy work to do. So I definitely respect that. (Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024)

This conversation showed a conversation that I interpreted as very important. Within this dialogue, Adrian is able to bring up a complex issue, and think more critically about how they would like to implement more positive youth development frameworks, but that it is difficult to do within the current situation at their youth work position. Within the first line, they also state that they were talking to another participant of the training about this issue. This shows that they have on multiple occasions shared their experience and wonderings, which may help other people think critically about the situation, as well as get feedback from both peers and experienced youth workers, which was the main goal of the training. They talk specifically about the 7 C's, which is an aspect that was central to the training, which shows that they have some grasp on that topic. It is not necessarily known that this person learned the 7 C's from this training, as they have had previous involvement in youth work, but it is showing understanding of the key themes.

Within this conversation they were able to get validation from Davis and share their problem that is an extremely common one within the youth work field. Things are constantly changing, and organization and staffing is often changing as well, and youth workers have to deal with many organizational challenges while also showing up for the young people they are

working with. Sharing this dilemma may help other people in the same positions, allowing them to get feedback on the best course of action as well.

Questions were asked often throughout the training. Many were straightforward questions that asked for clarification on the material that was being shared or asking what to do if they encounter certain situations. For example, during the mandated reporting section, one participant asked what to do if they see something of concern, and want to document it, but aren't allowed to take pictures of students. From this question Johnson was able to give them a direct answer to their question and guided them on the best and safest course of action to take. This could be a realistic situation that youth workers may have to deal with and having answers to those questions from someone with a lot of expertise in the topic can be really helpful to youth workers and the young people they are engaging with. Participants unpacking their specific dilemmas and wonderings show that they are considering the training material in a way that can potentially be put to use in their youth work experiences.

6.6 Engagement in Reflective Activities

Within the training workshop, it was important to us that we included activities focused on reflection and consideration of participants' experiences and ideas. This was especially essential to the positionality portion of the workshop. Lewis taught a session on positionality that called on participants to spend some time journaling and drafting statements on their own positionality. When participants were told what the task at hand was, they began jotting down different ideas. While these statements were not shared and I did not read the contents of any statements, I did see some people jotting down more bullet point style notes and some participants writing what seemed like essay style paragraphs. However, all participants seemed extremely engaged and focused during this activity. It was completely silent for the 10 minutes

this went on, and everyone seemed to have a decent amount to write down. Most continued to write until they were asked to stop.

We then took some time to go over how participants felt about the activity. Lewis told them that they did not have to share any specifics if they did not want to, and that she wanted to hear more about what the experience of writing was like for them. People did not hesitate to start sharing and talking about how their identities played a role in their life positions. Noah talked about how he had not thought about certain factors that shaped his identity before this exercise. He commented:

> Part of the thing that was kinda salient with me in writing this is...how much of my identity and my positionality is shaped and influenced by my family and trying to do things as a way to connect with them. I found that the three biggest parts of my identity really being from New York, being Jewish, and having devotion to teaching and to public school educating...are all very in line with my family and familial history stuff and there is this connecting piece of that which is not something that I really realized until I initially started to write this positionality statement. (Workshop Recording, February 25, 2024)

This activity gave this participant the space to think more critically about his identity and what informs it. This allows this participant to take these ideas and better understand how his identity impacts his life and work. Within this activity, Noah is showing high levels of engagement with the ideas and the task, which may indicate that this participant is taking in the material that is being taught within the training, and that the training is doing something to reach the goal of participants taking the opportunity to be more reflective about their experiences and use this within their youth work.

A major goal of the training and this section specifically was to think about positionality in terms of yourself and the young people that you are working with in your youth work, especially considering most of these participants are college students entering spaces with youth from the Worcester community, so those differences in positions need to be considered. During the unpacking of positionality statements, Taylor stated that,

> 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)

This participant is thinking critically about her own identity, and how it may be similar or different to certain students. She reflects on how sharing some identities with students does not mean that they have the same experiences overall, or share all of the same identities. This consideration of the different positions that this participant may have can open a lot of doors in conversation about how their work impacts students and how they can use some shared identity to connect with students, but not in all ways. Being reflective of your identity and positions and how it may impact your work with young people is crucial to effective youth work that does not harm youth. The participants engagement with this topic may indicate that they are more critically thinking about how their identities impact their work, and are therefore applying the learnings from the training to their own work, and this may lead to direct changes in how they carry out their youth work.

7. Conclusion

The training that Aine Sheehan and I developed alongside our experienced team of trainers proved to have many possible positive outcomes and covered the very important topics of mandated reporting, positive youth development, restorative justice, and positionality. During the development stages of the project, we gained a lot of support for the project and affirmation of the need for professional development that exists on Clark University's campus. The turnout of participants was drastically lower than we expected. Low attendance to these types of professional development or optional learning opportunities are not uncommon, but we still felt a lot of disappointment. There are many factors that could have led to this occurrence, and that have been considered in better understanding the outcomes of this project.

However, with the participants that did attend we saw high levels of engagement and reflection, which were major goals within creating this training. Participants showed immense understanding and appreciation for the topics, and were responsive during activities and discussions. The participants demonstrated connections to their own youth work experiences. They demonstrated this application to their own work by sharing examples and connections to their lives and current positions in youth work, asking specific questions on the material and their individual work, and indicating engagement in activities that were reflective in nature.

The training seemed to be effective in delivering the material and engaging participants in a way that was useful. The feedback form showed mostly positive outcomes for participants and also provided information that can be used to form future workshops. Overall, there were many aspects of the training that did not go as expected, however there were also a lot of positive outcomes that reinforce the importance of learning spaces and professional development practices in youth work.

In unpacking what could have caused the barriers to students attending our session despite showing support of it in the development and recruitment stage, I thought about the possibilities of humility playing a role in who attended the training. I theorize that this may be a part of the phenomenon that claims that the more you know about a subject, the more you know you have to learn (Dunning, 2011). I considered that students involved in youth work may feel that attending a training is admitting that they need it and may not be doing their job to the best of their ability. This could also be the case, but in terms of white people not seeking out training about cultural responsiveness and positionality because they believe it shows weakness in these areas currently, considering that participants that did attend were mostly students of color. Another potential factor is the common sentiment that acknowledgment of a problem is enough, and that no further action is required beyond that recognition. Individuals can also use acknowledgment as a way to point fingers at others instead of taking accountability for how they may have played a role in the problem.

In understanding how participants used the learning and applied it to their own experience, I observed what I believe to be evidence of this practice within transcripts from the training. I noticed that participants were showing active engagement by sharing their ideas and experiences, asking questions, and participating fully in activities that focus on reflection and self-evaluation. These observations can be used to imply that participants were thinking about and engaging with the training in a way that could be used in their own work. There is no way to fully understand if this application was actually done in action, but this data suggests that it could have been.

All of this data can suggest that in addition to the acknowledgment of a problem, humility is required to take that action a step further. The participants that attended the training, despite

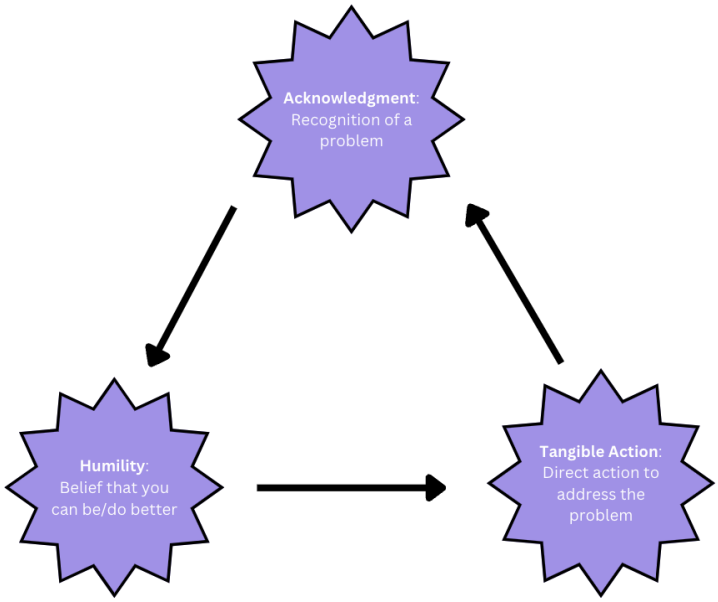
most having backgrounds in education and youth work, recognized their ability to learn and grow more, and made the decision to seek that out. They acknowledged a lack of training being provided, sought one out, and engaged with it in a way that may lead to them using the skills learned to better engage with youth. It also takes a great amount of humility to accept that you can learn not only from individuals with known expertise, but your peers as well, and this type of learning can be directly impactful in doing better for the young people that you work with.

This information calls for more work to be done on both the barriers to professional development, and the role of humility in taking tangible actions to address acknowledged problems. There is also a foundation to support more work being done in effective youth work training, especially ones that center positionality, and what it means for training to be effective. It would also be beneficial to better understand how participants of a training take their learning and apply it to direct action in their field. This project does a small amount in understanding these ideas, but if done on a larger scale, important ideas may present themselves.

7.1 Theoretical Implications

Throughout this project, I looked further into the ideas of acknowledgment and humility in hopes to better understand how they impact the path to action. In this case, the action is seeking out professional development and applying that back to their own work in order to be better for the young people they are serving. This work has shown more about the need for both acknowledgment and humility in creating a path to tangible action. In my initial conceptual framing of the relationship of acknowledgement, humility, and tangible action, I stated that the tangible action is reliant on the presence of both acknowledgement and humility, but wanted to better understand this dynamic. Through my work, I have seen that this relationship and reliance is indeed present, but the path to tangible action may look slightly different. My conceptual

framework included a diagram of how I perceived the dynamic of acknowledgement, humility, and action. In this diagram, I showed that both humility and acknowledgement impact on tangible action, but I did not show their relationship with each other. From my learnings during this work, I put forth a new diagram of this relationship.



Due to what I observed during this project, I believe that the path to tangible action is more cyclical in nature than originally depicted. In order for tangible action to occur the cycle needs to be completed. No one step of the path to action can be skipped if there is going to be effective action taken. For the acknowledgement of a problem to eventually lead to action, there is a stage of humility and reflection that occurs where the individual sees the potential and responsibility they have to do better and address the problem. This stage can lead to that individual taking the direct steps to address the problem, in other words, tangible action. The cycle can be repeated if the individual learns and reflects on the tangible action and continues the

work of growth and continuous action. Therefore, the path to action is not a straight, direct path, but a cycle over time that can eventually lead to effective change.

Acknowledgement in theoretical and social justice spaces has been framed as an important way to mitigate problems and past harms, but this work pushes this idea and questions how much acknowledgment alone can do. Within this work, the acknowledgment of the problem, said problem being the lack of professional development in youth work spaces, was there. However, we saw throughout this project that that was not enough to cause these individuals to act on that recognition when given the opportunity. Acknowledgment has been widely recognized as a positive and important action, and it can be, but it can also be used as a way to dissolve guilt and responsibility around a problem. Often the recognition alone is seen as enough, and people believe they have done their part once that recognition exists.

Additionally, an aspect of acknowledgment that was observed throughout this work was that acknowledgment can be a prideful act, and a way to pin the blame on others, and recognizing others harm instead of your own. In this sense acknowledgment can actually cause barriers to action instead of leading to it. The implications of this can tie back to many areas of work around acknowledgment and how we currently use acknowledgment in our society and social justice spaces. There is still a lot of room for acknowledgment, but there the complexity around the concept and how it is used can be further developed.

When understanding acknowledgment and its path to further action, we need to consider the ideas of humility and, inversely, pride. From what this work shows, the ideas are extremely interwoven and therefore, acknowledgment should not be talked about without the consideration of humility. Through this project, acknowledgment can be seen to be a prideful act, and that can detrimentally impact how much acknowledgment leads to anything productive. However, with

an increased awareness and humility around the problem and the use of critical self reflection, the acknowledgment can be something positive instead of something inherently prideful. Within this dynamic, more work and theorizing needs to be done in the educational spaces and all other spaces to better understand the ideas of acknowledgment and humility and unpack them in a way that highlights all of the complexity that exists.

7.2 Practice Implications

This research supports the further implementation of youth work professional development. The data showed that it is possible for youth work training to effectively teach important skills to youth workers at all levels. It is believed that youth work training is something that can directly impact outcomes in working with young people, as better prepared workers in such a complex and important field is critical in achieving the goals of the work and not inflicting harm onto students. However, this training, due to issues of attendance, should be made mandatory for any youth worker entering direct service with youth, especially from a college campus. This training should be implemented in the structure of Clark University, to require all students in youth based clubs on campus to attend professional development before entering the space with young people. This would ensure that this important information reaches everyone, and not those who opt into attending, and may not even be the individuals that are potentially causing harm within their positions. It is also worth looking into how to remove barriers from professional development in youth work so more people can access it. Some examples of this would be incentives to attend training workshops, or having more days and time available to attend training.

This work also supports the development of training that includes different styles of learning and that pushes youth workers to think about their own experiences in positions.

Making training more conversation based and activity based may be ways to make training more engaging and understandable so that participants can apply the material to their own work in a direct way. This may also be able to be done through developing and leading a training in a way that is collaborative and considers the ideas of multiple qualified youth workers.

During the development of the training, we made a lot of decisions that we thought were important during the time, but may not have ended up being effective. Throughout the training, we were really focused on making the training appealing to youth workers, but in the end, attendance was still low. We thought that making the training a one-time crash course on youth work and important topics in youth work would draw in many youth workers who may not have been willing to commit to professional development beyond that. In doing this, we cut out a lot of possible depth in the subject area due to time and assumptions about how much knowledge people would have prior to entering the training. In recruitment, we could have also included more on the training and why it is important for everyone to attend professional development. We did a lot of outreach, but we could have had more conversations around the crucial element of training.

Through outreach, I think that we could have also held more conversations with youth workers at Clark University about the design of the program and what they would benefit from. We mostly based the training off of what our trainers thought was best and what Aine and I knew about youth work. While I think that allowing for accurate and important training, including more from student youth workers who would be attending could have better catered the training towards the needs of students and possibly promoted further engagement due to participants feeling more involved in the development process. I believe that our beliefs around who should have the authority to develop training caused for an oversight in including others in the process. I

believe that our trainers are incredibly qualified and did an excellent job in implementing effective training, but there was more room for other voices in the process. This shortcoming is something that should be included in the development and implementation of future professional development.

7.3 Limitations

Within this project, there were many limitations in achieving the outcomes that we had hoped and in unpacking the outcomes of the work. One of the largest limitations was the lack of participants at the training. While this did allow us to have some more in depth discussions within the training, it is hard to make claims about the training and what was effective and what was not due to the small sample size. It would not be safe to soundly make assumptions about the outcomes of the training because there was such a small number of students in attendance and many things that were observed may have been coincidental.

Another limitation within the project was that we were unable to meet with our team and collect as much data as we had hoped about the process of developing a youth work training. If we had more consistent meetings as a full group, we may have been able to go more in depth with planning and understand that process better. We also had some minor issues in the flow of the training that made the amount of time that we had for each section shorter, so that limited the length and depth of the conversations that took place during each part of the training, preventing us from gaining more from that.

The feedback that we were able to collect after the training was also somewhat limiting. On our feedback form, we received some helpful information, but the amount of information was not a lot. In retrospect it would have been helpful to add more questions about the participants' experience and how they are going to use the information received in the future. It could have

also been beneficial to conduct interviews with participants for the same reasons. Interviews would have let us dive a lot deeper into what participants were thinking and what the outcomes of the training were.

Looking back at our initial study design and what I was able to learn from the process of this work, there were many ways that this study could have been changed in order to make for more productive practice and learning. The major flaws in the research was the lack of opportunities to ask follow up questions and have more in depth conversations with participants about what occurred within the training, and their perceptions of professional development in the youth work field. It would have also been helpful to have more information from youth workers who did not attend the training to understand why and what could have been done differently in the future to increase the scale of the training. If this work was done again in the future, the implementation of these changes and addressing these limitations could have allowed for more knowledge to be produced around training and how it can be more available and utilized in youth work spaces.

7.4 Closing

This work looks deeper into the current barriers to training within youth work, and suggests that a lot of it falls within individuals not attending opportunities that exist. The problem is not that this problem is not acknowledged but that in order for acknowledgment to move toward action there needs to be some level of humility where the individual is recognizing that they can do better. This is an intrinsic value that cannot be forced on a person. However, we may be able to promote this idea in youth workers through conversations about professional development and highlighting how it can benefit all youth workers regardless of experience or knowledge. It should also be emphasized throughout recruitment that the training is for everyone

and not just for people who are lacking skills in some way. This can make up for the lack of humility or defensiveness that youth workers may have surrounding training. In order for training to reach more people, there also needs to be a removal of other logistical barriers that may be interfering with participation. While this may not be the largest issue in attendance, is it still necessary to ensure that training is accessible as possible so that anyone who is willing to seek out further training can do so. During the training itself participants demonstrated levels of engagement with the material that indicated the possibility of its application in further work, leading to direct action.

This work highlights the importance of the development of youth work training, and that this training becomes mandatory. A baseline training should be required for all of those entering youth spaces. Due to how many factors, including individual humility, can impact the attendance of professional development, we cannot rely on youth workers seeking out training on their own. There needs to be structures in place that ensure that all youth workers have some preparation and information on basic topics before working with young people, because they have the ability to do real harm without the necessary resources. The training showed evidence of being effective in allowing participants to apply it to their work outside of the workshop, which can have a direct impact on youth, however due to the attendance of the program, it did not reach as many people as we had hoped. Preparing youth workers is essential especially with the direct role that these individuals may play in a young person's life. This job should not be taken lightly, and professional development emphasizes this importance while providing the skills and knowledge necessary to do the job to the best of a youth worker's ability.

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Appendix

A. 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.

B. Post Training Feedback Form Full Responses

1. What did you like about the training?

Participant #[2]	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 appreciated getting lunch :))

[2] The Post Training Feedback Form was anonymous, so participant numbers do not align with how participants were referred to in previous sections.

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*