

Pacify, Connect, Emancipate: Reflections on Youth Work Practice in the USA



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Who am I?



- Professor at University of Minnesota, Youth Studies, School of Social Work
- International Youth Work Trainer and Educator (Japan, Korea, Laos, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Canada, Morocco, Northern Ireland, Ireland, Netherlands, USA, Croatia)
- Former Youth Worker (in Minneapolis, MN; Belfast, Northern Ireland)
- Youth Studies, UMN, emerged from the Center for Youth Development and Research (Dr. Konopka)

What is Youth Work?



- Multidisciplinary
- Direct and Indirect
- Caring Profession
- Craft Orientation
- Family of Practices and Occupations

What Do Youth Workers Need to Know?



- Youth, Youthhood, Young People, Young Person
- Pedagogy
- Rights: Human, Youth, Minority
- Local Knowledge (History, Sociology, Economy, Culture, Geography, etc.) about young people
- Care practices (History and variety)
- Ethics and values of youth work
- Local Resources and Services

What Do Youth Workers Do?



- Essential

- Care
- Listen
- Relate
- Inform
- Respond
- Connect
- Educate (Informally/
Experientially)
- Learn/ Research and
Evaluate

- Desired

- Animate
- Advocate
- Innovate
- Place-making
- Empower

What are the challenges?



- Learned incapacity
- (a)ctivism
- Verbalism
- Authoritarianism
- Colonialism

What Questions Should We Continue to Ask?



- How do we define youth work without limiting innovation, especially in our rapidly changing world?
- How does youth work provide opportunity and prevent indoctrination?
- What is the role of field, academy, practitioners, and state in defining youth work?

What questions do you have?



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