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Swk499: Integrative Seminar

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Reflective Assessment on Competency

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

- **In what ways have I accomplished this competency/practice behaviors?** I have accomplished competency 2 “*Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice*” by being aware that all of my participants in the field placement have unique experiences and characteristics that have forced them to shape their behavior in a particular manner. For example, all of the participants under my care are youth offenders; that have had a prior arrest or encounter with the police. For this reason, I am aware that doing any outdoor activities that involve law enforcement might be uncomfortable for them. Also, the population that I serve (*Black and Hispanic*) are all part of a marginalized community near the south Bronx that is usually under some kind of oppression. That being said, I tried to hear and understand each one of their stories and value the worth of the individuals instead of being judgemental and harsh towards them.
- **How has my thinking changed over time?** My thinking has not changed as much being that I was already aware of how to deal with people with different cultures and diversities. I also identify myself with my participants being that I am a Latino male that grew up in a marginalized community that was under a lot of oppression by the NYPD. However, I became more self-aware of how youth are being portrayed and what personal bias I have developed. For Example; I noticed that by constantly watching the news channel I started to believe that the young people in the Bronx community only wanted to commit crimes for a living. However, working one-on-one with these young kids I noticed that most of them are searching for their identity and guidance. Many of them come from unstable homes and are trying to find ways to survive their difficult upbringing. As I learn about the different factors that impact my participant’s life whether it be at the micro, mezzo, or macro levels, I am more understanding and compassionate towards them.

- **What are the practice behaviors that indicate my competency in this area?** One of the practice behaviors that indicate my competency in this area is self-regulation. I have learned to carefully process my thoughts whenever I am assessing a client. For example; many of my participants in the practicum have been arrested for gun possession, however I can not automatically assume that all of my clients are hostile or intent to hurt other people. I have learned that many of them are just scared and just want to protect themselves from other people trying to hurt them. Also, Being aware of the kind of discrimination and oppression my clients are experiencing due to their economical, racial, or age status allows me to hear each one of their stories and learn to understand them from their own personal experiences.
- **What curriculum content areas (social policy, practice, etc.) relate to successfully completing this competency?** I believe that the curriculum content areas that most relate successfully to Competency 2: “*Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice*” has to be one-on-one practice. When we engage in practice with our client we laid the groundwork from where we would start building. Assessing our clients is extremely important when it comes to this competency because it would help me understand my client on a more personal level. Lastly, I noticed that having group counseling relates successfully with this competency. Group counseling is beneficial in my field placement because it brings awareness of how some factors like racism and poverty impact marginalized people as a whole. Since all of my clients are young Black and Hispanic males, having group discussions allows them to realize that they aren’t the only one going through a hard time and eventually they become motivated to share their story and have discussions with other youth.
- **What learning experiences helped me to accomplish this competency?** Participating in my Field placement allowed me to learn the experiences needed to accomplish this competency. By interacting with participants and listening to my supervisor’s experiences allow me to understand how we are all unique individuals and each one of our behaviors have been shaped throughout the different experiences that we have. For example; a young person that was raised in a different environment like a group home would react differently than a young person that had stability and was raised with both of their parents. The young person that was raised in different group homes might struggle more with being instructed or disciplined than the young person who was raised with both parents.

- **What “gaps” can I identify in my learning experience? What will I do about these “gaps”?** I identified that the gap I have is that I can be quick to judge at times. I realized that whenever I study a case and read the police report I imagine my client just as the police officer described them in their report. I have noticed that even before I met the person I have already judged them on how they might be and the kind of person they are. I understand that this can affect me on how I receive my client when I eventually meet them. One way I can fix the “gap” in my learning experience is by not having any preconceived ideas on what kind of person my client is. Also, whenever I read my client record I have to be aware that many police officers exaggerate their report to manipulate how my client is looked at in court.
- **Professional Growth Plan, identify goals for continued personal and professional growth and discuss how you plan to reach these goals).** My professional growth plan is to find more effective ways on how to understand my client. This goal can be reached by implementing reflective listening. Instead of leading the conversation I would encourage my clients to share their story and how they would like me to help them get better. By doing this, I understand that my clients are the experts of their own experiences. Also, doing activities that they enjoy rather than the normal one-on-one sessions can help me connect with them more effectively.

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- **Select a case from your field experience (any system size). The case must reflect clients or client issues involving an at-risk or oppressed population.** The case I selected is John’s. John is a 14 year old male that lives in the south Bronx area. John’s parents are both working during the day while John hangs around older kids that are involved in gang activities and stealing cars. Even though John shared his frustration to me about how he had been wrongfully accused of a crime that he did not commit, I informed John that I am not here to accuse him of anything but instead I would like to help him. I understand that what John is going through is not caused by one simple issue but is the consequence of many different factors. During my *SWK314 Human behavior* course I learned that with cases like John’s we would have to do an assessment and understand his biopsychosocial behavior to get a clearer picture of what his situation is.
- **Demonstrate the capacity to apply and communicate the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences.** The way I can apply and communicate the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences is by understanding

how important people's life experiences are and how it shapes their behavior. For example; I learned that you can not fully understand someone if you don't take the time to understand their background and culture. I have learned that in order for me get to know my clients I have to allow them to give me a verbal tour of where they have be.

- **Demonstrate the capacity to engage clients as experts of their own experiences.** I demonstrate the capacity to engage clients as experts of their own experiences by doing a lot of reflective listening and allowing them to talk about themselves. Many times, while my client describes to me their life experiences I would ask them to clarify certain events for me in order to make sure I fully understand what they are saying. I also summarize what they said at the end of their sentences, so that they can explain to me what exactly they want me to understand and not what I assume.
- **Demonstrate how personal biases and values were identified and managed through self-awareness and self-regulation.** I identified my personal biases by being self aware of how I was viewing my clients due to the case notes and police reports I was reading. I realized that I was labeling my clients way before I even met them. I started removing all preconceived ideas of my clients and allowed them to tell me how they are and allow myself to listen to their stories.