

Running Head: PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATIVE PAPER

Professional Integrative Paper

Tammy Howard

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

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Kathy Purnell, MSW

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I do not feel that I was born to be a social worker. I believe that this is a role I stumbled upon after years of struggling to gain equality for my family; my children to be exact. The Social Work Practicum workbook states that most social workers feel “called” to the profession of social work because they are committed to and passionate about helping others. I do find this to be true in addition to the fact that for me it was a way to create positive change and to make a difference not only within my community but within society as a whole. For me the passion for social work comes from pain and hurt. As a Caucasian woman I think that I was naïve about the prejudices and discrimination that people from minority groups face. It was not until I combined my life with an African American man that I began to realize the pain and deprivation that discrimination can cause an individual. This is where my journey to social work begins.

I feel that the values I have are the values needed and expected to become a professional social worker. I have learned so much during my student career as a beginning social worker but within all the knowledge, I have also gained the ethical values and principles needed to conduct myself in a dignified and professional manner. These are values that will remain with me throughout not only my professional life but my personal life as well. I feel that my ethical responsibilities’ are the most important thing I have to offer my future clients within practice. The three most specific that I feel are the most important to me include 1) Dignity and worth of the person. I have been in many situations in my life where I was treated inferior to the professional I was working

with; due to this fact, I know how it feels to be treated as a worthless or uneducated person and I will do everything in my power to make sure that I am not the one responsible for making any other individual feel that same way. I as a social work professional will treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of each individual's differences, cultural and ethnic diversity as stated in the code of ethics.

I have learned how to see people for who they are and to realize that just because someone may look, talk or act differently than I, they still have a significant worth and deserve my respect. 2) I found the passion for social justice many years ago I just didn't have a name for it then. This passion carries on into my professional life as well. I believe that equality is something that should be demanded and not asked for. Social workers are responsible for challenging any social injustices seen within the community or society as a whole. I believe we are meant to be the voice for vulnerable and oppressed individuals. It is our duty to fight for social change and to ensure equal access to needed information, services, and resources for all people regardless of sexual orientation, gender, race, age or ethnicity. I am personally a strong believer in equality and diversity within society and I tend to become very angry and frustrated when I see inequality, discrimination and prejudice used as a way to hold another individual down. If there is in fact an "American Dream" in this country, I feel that this should be attainable for everyone who inspires to have it and that is my goal as a social worker to make sure everyone has access to achieving their dreams and goals.

## Professional Integrative Paper 4

In my field agency we work with clients that are not of legal age and most of the times their tiny voices are overlooked or fall on deaf ears, as a social worker it is my duty to make those voices heard. I feel a need to advocate for people who are being held down. I feel that there is no one person better than another. Yes, we all make mistakes but what makes us decent and respectable individuals is that we can acknowledge those mistakes and move past them to create change. I also believe that self assessment plays a huge part in who you become. I am constantly looking at myself and trying to be aware of personal biases and prejudices that I might hold and may not be aware of.

In addition to advocating for oppressed individuals, I have learned from my field agency the importance of working within my area of competence. 3) Competence; I feel that it is my duty not just as a social worker but as a respectable human being to be knowledgeable within the area of practice I will be working in. If there is something I don't know or am unsure about then it is my duty ask questions. In addition to this, I have realized that it is OK to not know. People are counting on me to make decisions for them that are going to benefit and or assist them not hurt them. The decisions I make should be based on a professional knowledge and a developed skill. I hold the lives of families in my hands and their futures depend on my professional competence. I take that very serious.

I feel that the most positive and attractive thing about a career in social work is that I have the ability to make an impact. While fighting for equality for my children, I was limited to what I could do. Now, I have the education and skills needed to create

change. I have learned how to form a group, create goals and objectives, advocate for policy change, communicate with the media, and how to seek out the right people and agencies for support. I am not sure that racism and discrimination will ever be forever banished from society but my hope is that I can make such a positive impact on this community that these issues will not be in the forefront as they have been in the past and still continue to be in the present.

In the next five years, I would like to be a policy advocate working in Washington D.C. I believe that if you want to promote policy changes, the best place to start is at the top.

As a professional social worker, I am obligated to elevate service to others above my own self-interest, to focus on forms of social injustice, to treat each person with the utmost dignity and respect, to understand the relationship between the children and their micro system, to be aware of my personal values, and ethical standards and lastly to practice within my area of expertise or competence.

While writing this paper on my professional development, I came to the realization that I AM HUMAN and in the process of learning and implementing the code of ethics into my professional career, I will make mistakes but I feel that what will make me a great social worker is to acknowledge those mistakes and make changes to correct them.