

Self Reflection Paper

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Abstract

This paper will discuss the authors social identity and how his identity impacts his experiences throughout life. The beginning of the paper starts by explaining what has led the author to pursue a degree in Social Work and the various populations that interest him. Next the author explains his personal history, values, beliefs, and significant life events that has motivated him to pursue a Social Work degree. The author then describes his social identity and where he stands in society by explaining the experiences with privilege and oppression. Then in this paper the author explains his strengths and limitations in reference to the Social Work profession. Lastly, the author concludes the paper by addressing the dreams, goals and aspirations where he explains his ideals and how he would like to make a difference in the helping profession.

Keywords: social work, social Identity, injustice, oppression

Self Reflection Paper

In today's society knowing your social identity is important and helps individuals gain a sense of belonging. Social identity helps shape our self image and helps individuals know how to interact with others. My social identity may look different from my friends or other people that I may see on a regular day basis. My social identity gives me many disadvantages and advantages, it also impacts how I navigate through society and engage with different individuals. In this paper I discuss why the Social Work career is important to me and what has led me to pursue this degree. I explain how I plan on working with those individuals battling mental illness and also how the youth population is the population I feel I will work successfully with. I address my personal history and the different turning points that have occurred in my life that have led me to pursue a Social Work degree. I also discuss how my siblings and family have a huge influence on my life and career path. Next I explain my social identity and the privileges and oppression I experience while being an African American, Christian, straight, male in society. I relate that to the Social Work degree and how my social identity will have a positive impact on my career as a Social Worker. I then explain my strengths and limitations in reference to Social Work and how I will continue to work on them. I address my different qualities and attributes that will help me become successful in the Social Work profession. Lastly I will conclude the paper by discussing my dreams, goals, and aspirations and how I will make a difference in the helping profession.

Pursuing a Social Work Career

During my freshman year and part of my sophomore year as a college student I started as a business major. While being a business major I struggled everyday trying to understand what I wanted to pursue with this business degree. It took a while for me to realize that this business major was not the degree I needed to pursue. I realized that if I wanted to make a great impact on society in order to make a positive change, Social Work should be the degree I pursue. The various events that have occurred in our society regarding racism, discrimination, social injustice and oppression have impacted my decision of pursuing a Social Work career. Once I graduate with a Social Work degree I plan on working as a Youth Social Worker, Forensics Social Work, Public Policy, Child Welfare, or working with Mental Health. I feel that being an African American male in today's society can bring many challenging experiences and obstacles. As an African American male Social Worker I can have the ability to help those who are impacted by racism, discrimination, social injustice, oppression, etc. As a Social Worker I hope to work with the teen or younger adult populations because I feel that I can impact their lives the most. Those two populations experience many difficulties in their life that can impact them in various ways. I will be able to be an advocate for these groups of individuals and assisting them to needed programs and services. I believe that supporting positive youth development can help change our world by being involved at an earlier stage in their lives. Just like any other population I feel that there are many skills that are needed to work with the youth population. My communication, understanding, patience, and listening skills will all allow me to successfully work with this population. All of those skills are essential while working with a younger population because younger individuals do not have the ability to advocate for themselves, so it will be my job to help them gain any services or assistance they may need by using these skills. I will need to learn more ways to be engaged with the youth to make sure they feel empowered. I need to learn more about how to activate the strengths of these younger individuals in order for me to play an impactful role in their lives.

Personal History

I have experienced many turning points that have contributed to my desire of becoming a helper. Growing up I participated in many community service events and one that really changed my perspective on how I viewed different things in this world, was when I got the opportunity to prepare food for kids who were less fortunate than most. I was able to experience this in high school, me and my fellow classmates helped these kids with their homework and got to hang out with them because most of them did not live in a stable home with very little social life. That community service experience was a turning point for me on how other people lived that had a different economic status than me. At the time I knew I loved helping people that were dealing with issues like lack of food, shelter, and various other things but I did not know that was the mindset of a Social Worker. My 11th grade year I got the opportunity to be apart of an exchange program in Spain for 10 days. I was able to live with a Spain student and his family, there I got to experience how people that look different from me, talk different from me, and participate in unique traditions and customs different from mine, live their everyday lives. This experience in Spain led me to want to become a helper because while being there I saw many individuals battling homelessness. Although all of these experiences changed my perspective on how I viewed the world, it took me a while for me to realize that Social Work was the career I need to pursue.

I have three brothers and two sisters, I am the third oldest so I play a huge role being a role model for both my younger siblings and older siblings. My siblings look up to me in everything I do and they really impact me to be the best version of myself because thats all I would want for them. One reason why I see myself working with the youth is because of my siblings, I have watched them grow up and experience similar obstacles I did as a child. My siblings have brought out my Social Work traits and characteristics such as, listening skills, leadership skills, and being a role model. All of these skills have helped me be a great brother to my siblings and these traits can be useful as I move forward in the Social Work profession.

Being a Christian and living in a Christian household all my life, there has been many values and beliefs that I have learned and been taught. As a Christian I am suppose to treat others with kindness and

grace. Many of the values I have obtained throughout my life have impacted how I navigate through society and engage with others. Values such as, generosity, courage, love, and respect have been very important to me and my family, these values are also essential for Social Workers. These values have been the foundation of my life and have influenced my decisions related to my relationships, career and other activities I have been engaged in. Values like respect and generosity will be essential in the Social Work profession because as a Social Worker I will be engaging with individuals from various backgrounds, genders, sexual orientation, ethnicities, religions, etc. I understand that my future clients may have different beliefs than me but it will still be my job to make sure I advocate for them in order for them to have access to any needed assistance and services.

Social Identity

I am a straight, middle-class, African American, Christian, male, I understand that my identity may lead to many obstacles, disadvantages and even advantages. My social identity has led me to experience oppression, racism, and privileges. As an African American I have experienced racism many times in my school, workplace, and sport teams just because of the color of my skin. I have experienced prejudice from my white counterparts plenty of times, there are times where an individual of a different race sees me as a threat just by me walking down the sidewalk. I understand as a middle class citizen I have experienced many different privileges that individuals living in poverty do not get to experience, like a roof over their head, shoes on their feet, a working car etc. I believe my social identity will have a positive impact on my career as a Social Worker in many ways. Being that there are not many black males or males in general that pursue a Social Work degree, I can impact groups of individuals that other Social Workers may not have much of an impact on. As a black Social Worker I can understand and relate to certain issues and situations my clients may be experiencing. Competence and cultural humility are important to creating equitable and inclusive services to my clients. In order to assess my levels of cultural competence and cultural humility it is important for me to continue my education and knowledge within this career by attending grad school to further my knowledge. Since the youth is the population I hope to successfully work with, becoming culturally competent and practicing cultural humility is essential to serving youth of color and indigenous youth. Understanding diversity, equity and inclusion is important in the Social Work profession. Diversity is ensuring that all individuals of various ethnicities, races, religion, sexual orientation and gender are being represented. Inclusion is important because it ensures that not only those groups of people are being represented but feel a sense of belonging and togetherness. Equity is ensuring that individuals are not only equal but making sure they have what they need in order to enjoy life. All of these are important to understand as a Social worker because my future clients may not be afforded the opportunity to live a diverse, equitable and inclusive lifestyle due to the oppression, discrimination, prejudice, and biases that impact our society.

Strengths and Limitations

I know as a Social Worker it is not only important to understand our strengths but also our weaknesses and limitations as well. I believe that throughout my life I have obtained many strengths that has made me the human being I am today. One strength I find important for me as a Social Worker are my listening skills, I am capable to be attentive, keep an open mind and have great understanding. This strength is essential when working with clients and in order to ensure they have the needed services and assistance, being able to listen to their issues is important. I understand as a Social Worker I may experience tough situations with clients so being able to be resilient is another strength that I have. I tend to show empathy for others and place myself in their shoes. Empathy and empowerment is very important as a Social Worker because clients have many different life experiences that have a significant impact on their lives. It is a Social Worker's job to show empathy and empower them in order for them to live a healthier life. At my current stage of professional development I have a few insecurities that I face, sometimes I try to be too perfect at something that I criticize myself when it doesn't go the way I planned. This will be something I will have to work on because there will be many times in my Social Work career that something will not go as I planned but it is my job to ensure my client is well. In order to overcome the insecurities I have as a professional I will have to ensure I take care of my own mental health so I am not frustrated when it comes to the Social Work job.

Dreams, Goals and Aspirations

I am a very ambitious individual, so my dreams, goals, and aspirations are what motivate me to be a successful person. I have always wanted others to see me as a leader, role model, and a positive person. I know that society does not see me a black man as such, instead they may perceive me as a threat, dangerous, violent and unsuccessful. Through this helping profession I want to make a difference in our world and affect positive change in our society. In order to make a difference in a helping profession I feel that it begins with the youth and younger individuals because they are the future of our world. In order to live out my ideals I need to stay educated and gain knowledge about the different social issues people experience so I am capable to help them. In conclusion, I would like others to see me as an advocate, social worker,