Legacy of Learning

Systems Theory has been an important part of my junior year experience. In order to understand my place in the world I had to learn how everything and everyone connects. I had to start from a single unit, myself. Moving outward, I learned about larger systems and the way these systems work just like smaller ones, to sustain themselves. I have explored the things that either disrupt or balance the workings of a system and I believe the knowledge acquired during my junior year is an important foundation in my career as a human service professional.

During fall quarter, I had the opportunity to understand the ripple effect in a family system. This was a key lesson that I easily applied to Human Services. For example, when one person in a family displays disruptive behavior, the effects of that behavior reflect on other family members and the need to restore peace and normalcy to this family set a corrective plan in action, a plan that may come from us, human service professionals. I also examined my own reasons for becoming a human service professional as well as my place in the world. My awareness of my role as a helper through my life experiences reaffirmed my commitment to help others become independent. I am proud of the values I have learned from my family and I recognize strengths, such as empathy and willingness to help as tools that can bring great satisfaction in this career.

Winter quarter allowed me to explore my communication needs with my dyad partner Tawny. I was able to practice my assertiveness skills feeling safe in my dyad. We also worked on being real partners, wanting the best for each of us and for the relationship as outlined in the book *True Partnership* (Zaiss, 2002) collaboration at an optimal level will bring about successful contributions and that has been true for the two years I have known my dyad partner. Thanks to our meetings during this class, I have become more confident asking for what I want out of the relationship stating it clearly and concisely. I believe there was a great deal of personal growth this quarter as the use of effective interpersonal skills started to become second nature. I was struck by some realities human services professionals could encounter by reading the book *Turning Stones* (Parent, 1996) crisis intervention without closure is described and it was something that I had never considered. It was also the first time I thought about what I would do in a high stress situation, and this is where active listening and capturing the essence of the exchange with the client then paraphrasing seems to be the best thing to do.

Spring quarter has brought a new challenge and a new appreciation for group work. I never gave a second thought to the process of facilitating a group discussion, I have been a member of groups but I had not thought about making sure my participation was relevant. Of course, I was now able to bring my assertiveness to the group, and as a member, I made myself heard. The one thing I can say is missing is conflict. I wish there had been conflict so we could have practiced how to deal with it. Our meetings were extremely productive and positive, I met with wonderful classmates and I have learned a lot from them. Each person has their own leadership style and I felt engaged in the dynamics every time, it was amazing to see who the natural leaders and researchers were and how much they contributed to our meetings. One of the most interesting exercises was talking about recent newspaper headlines, where we can pinpoint several things that may not be apparent to the everyday person, such as biases that came up for some of our classmates. It was enlightening to see who the target populations were and how some classmates spoke as agents in many cases. I am a minority in the University, and it is easy to feel like a target, but at the same time, it is great to know that in many cases I am only what I perceive myself to be. I can become an agent of change and support for others like me.

Overall, these core classes have helped me appreciate my future career as a human service professional as a part of something bigger, a mission of improving the world a little bit at a time, person by person until everybody feels empowered and capable of reaching for their place in the world.

# References

Parent, M. (1996). *Turning stones: My days and nights with children at risk.* New York, NY: The Random House Publishing Group.

Zaiss, C. (2002). *True partnership: Revolutionary thinking about relating to others.*San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

**Systems Within Systems in my Life**

**Western**

**HSP Program**

**My Husband**

**My**

**Family**

**My Culture**

**My Community**

**The World!!!**

**EvCC**