

# Learning Synthesis

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This class taught me the most about myself and who I will become in the human services profession. I began thinking the education I would receive from this program would be just as any other, strictly academic. Over the last few weeks I was constantly proven wrong with how much I learned each day, both about myself, and about other professionals as well.

I came into the program thinking I was going to study and learn facts to help me get through my career in the human services field. What I have gained from this first quarter was more than I feel I learned throughout my entire two and a half years at Everett Community College. Everything I learned in the past was fact based; I only had to know it for the quarter to get a good grade, and that was it. I thought this was how it had to be for every class. I would learn the material for one quarter and by the time the next one began everything was forgotten. The style of learning going on throughout the human services program here at Western is completely different. All learning objectives focus on skills and hands on learning. I find this learning style much more effective for me as a student. In contrast to how I felt at Everett, I am confident that the skills and techniques I learn within the next two years will stay with me through my career.

The focus of this course was to “[e]xplore personal systems in relation to other systems.” (Mullane, 2011) By doing so, as a student I learned a lot about myself and my part in the world, especially as a human service professional. Each

week we discussed how we were doing, how our week had been, and what was going on in our lives. Every time it became my turn, it forced me to think about my life. I had to decide what I wanted to share and reflect on how my past week had been. Through reflection I learned about my life from a different perspective than I was used to. On the average day I wouldn't think about how my day was, what I did, or who I was with; instead I would focus on what I was going to do next, planning for something else to happen. After experiencing how important reflection is in life I am seeing that it could be beneficial to everybody. Learning how to reflect, and then proceeding to do so, allow concerns from past events to be considered a learning experience, also allowing a person to grow. The technique and skill of reflection can be used in the human services field. Allowing your client to reflect on their experiences helps them to better understand the predicament they might be facing. It makes sense to me, that this is the reason we were asked to reflect on our own lives each week in class. Once we are able to reflect on ourselves and learn from our personal experiences, we will be able to help other people learn from their experiences as well.

Through the Kolb learning inventory I was able to better understand the type of learner I am. According to the assessment I am an accommodator. In essence, I learn best by using a trial and error method and by hands on activities. I find these results to be true. The classes I have overly excelled in were the more active and

less fact based. American Sign Language, choir, yoga, and dance have always been easiest to learn. Alongside this, I find introduction to human services (a fact based course where we are tested on if we can remember and know events) comes more challenging. This has always been the case for me. From back in elementary school through now, I have barely gotten by when it comes to memorization. In American Sign Language, for example, we were required to know a large amount regarding the deaf community. However, instead of learning it from a book or a lecture, we were required to go out into our own community and to learn what it is like to live as a deaf person, hands on. I found this more exciting and allowed me to really learn what the culture is like and what experiences a deaf person would have. I don't believe I would have learned as much if I had read it from a book. Even today I still remember and know everything I learned about deaf culture, but for the life of me, I cannot remember anything I learned in my history classes. It is interesting to know that I have been this type of learner throughout my entire life. I used to believe that since I got good grades and was able to pass each class I was an individual learner that could just get by with temporarily learning facts. In reality, the type of learner I am is entirely different. Knowing to reflect on my past, I can use knowledge of my learning style to enhance the way I continue to learn and grow as a student and as a professional.

Along with learning about myself over the quarter, I grew as a professional. This class forced me to think about the true reasons why I want to help in my community. I always knew the simple reasons, to help people get into a better place and to provide a sense of hope in times of need. During the “why do I want to help” presentation I was able to reflect more on my past experiences and recognize the real reasons I want to help. Growing up my older brother, younger sister, and I were abused. I am grateful to say that for my sister and I the abuse was mild, it wasn’t frequent and only happened when our dad got overly angry with us. My brother however, got the worst of it. This caused him to act out and become involved in drugs, alcohol, and theft at an early age. By the time he was in high school he was going in and out of a juvenile delinquent facility and eventually spent a few years in prison. My sister, who just began high school this year, thankfully isn’t reacting as strongly. From experience living with police visiting my house almost on a weekly basis, coming home to find my brother drunk or high doing something terrible, and being abused myself, I was able to make the most important decision of my life. I was not going to live and act out like my brother did, instead I wanted to make something of my life and prove to both myself and my family that I am different. In elementary and middle school my very close friend was beginning to experience the same thing I had with my family. Unfortunately, she wasn’t as lucky to have it end after just a few years. We grew

very close together in elementary school where we were considered to be adopted children by our parents. Once these problems started happening to her, I felt it was my family going through the same struggles again. Her family is still struggling with addictions and theft, among other things. As time went by and I began community college in my junior year in high school I began to realize my purpose in life was to help people who have been in a similar situation as me. I began to understand I was meant to serve in my community and to advocate for children. The experiences I had to endure with my family and my very close friend's family is the true reasons why I want to help. Throughout the quarter I didn't understand that all of these experiences are the reason I want to help, where-as helping people into a better life and out of bad situations is what I want to come of being able to help.

A large part of this course was learning about our values. Values can be shaped by a multitude of factors including experiences and the way an individual is raised. These values can come from our family or our Christian faith. In the beginning I thought of values as things I hold dear to my heart. These things included my family, friends, Christian faith, and my education. After learning a bit more about what a value really is, I re-evaluated my life. I have learned that I value love, achievement, dreaming, loyalty, faith, hopefulness, optimism, respect, and trust. All of these values came from my experiences and from events or

relationships. Love, achievement, dreaming, loyalty, respect, and trust all are based and came from my family and how I was raised. Living with a family where every day was a mystery and never knowing what problems could appear, I grew to value the things I didn't necessarily receive or experience during my childhood. Once I began high school I became strongly involved in my church. Nobody in my family was spiritual and I was never raised into any religion. This gave me the freedom to make my own decision about my beliefs and inspired choices I made later on.

I was also raised listening to country music. This genre is about expressing yourself, your love for God, friends and family, and about respecting yourself and people around you. As I have gotten to know myself better this quarter I have come to realize that there are many different aspects in culture that influence who you become. Country music is a large influence in my life and has taught me to love some of the values I hold. These values include hard work, Christianity, and romance, all three things I value to this day.

Sometimes as a human service professional one might wonder what effect they can have on the world with only the ability to work in one small community at a time. Briggs and Peat provide an explanation of how far a small amount of energy can go. Lesson two in life lessons of chaos explains a butterfly's significance in the world at large by stating "a butterfly fluttering its wings doesn't seem to possess much power. But an ancient proverb says that the power of a

butterfly's wings can be felt on the other side of the world." (Briggs & Peat, 1999, p. 31) The symbolism of a butterfly's wings fluttering acknowledges the ripple effect and how each action, no matter how trivial, impacts the universe. The ripple effect clarifies no matter how small your effort may seem there will be a new result because of it. I find this interpretation encouraging and enlightening. I have struggled in the past with the idea that whatever I do, I'm not going to make the difference I want to see. I knew, somewhere in my heart, that even though it was a small contribution, it was an effort and even a little bit can go a long way. Today I can confidently say any contribution I have to give will make an impact. It might take years or millenniums to see the change, nevertheless, through the ripple effect I can influence somebody else to act on their heart as well.

The forms of assignments in this class were well designed and helpful to me as a learner. Having the discussions, online activities, and readings provided a change in technique of learning. I enjoy having to use resources outside the classroom to complete some of the class work. I feel learning bits at home and being able to study in places other than the classroom was very beneficial. It forced me to continue thinking about the topic at hand where-ever I happened to be. Doing so allowed me to gain more insight and to learn the topic better than if I was just focusing on it in class.



This quarter I have learned about the multiple systems I play a part in and will continue to grow in as my professional self grows; I have learned and grown tremendously in knowing who I am, how I learn, what my values consist of, and what shapes me as a whole. From the list of national standards listed in the syllabus, I feel confident I have gone above and beyond in exceeding that they are all met. From my country Christian heart and soul to my confident and professional demeanor, I have no doubt I will continue to grow and succeed as a human service professional and as a member of the world.

## References

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