

Case Construction Analysis

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Client Presenting and Underlying Problem

The client I met with on November 10, 2020 was a single, Caucasian female in her late thirties. Client appeared to be neatly dressed but contradicted that by saying they look “beat to heck.” She seemed to be open about her struggles and was direct about what she needed help with. She currently resides with her two children ages 3 and 10 at a homeless shelter nearby. She came in looking for relief and safety for herself and kids.

She reported that she has been in the shelter for about 2 weeks but is looking for guidance on where she should go next. She expressed being unhappy with her current circumstances at the shelter. The client stated that she does not like how crowded the shelter is and the curfew it has in place. Her initial problem was that she needed a new place to stay that was safe for her and her kids. This further developed when we debriefed on her reasoning to finding safety. She reported fleeing a prior domestic abuse relationship with the kids’ father. She described how her, and her ex-partner would get into arguments about who should be working and who would take on the role of staying home with the kids. The client expressed how arguments would escalate and she would be “thrown up against walls” in front of their kids. The client reported it being a “terrible environment” and due to that, she chose to live in her car then to a shelter later on with her kids. Client reported having financial difficulties and is struggling to support her kids. She mentioned she had a small savings and a master’s degree in early education.

Client’s Strengths and Social Justice Issues

The clients’ resilience showed through as she continued explaining her past domestic violence relationship. She felt that she was capable of taking on the role of the breadwinner rather than being a stay at home mother. This did not pan out how she wanted it to, but she was aware that her master’s degree could have been beneficial at the time. Later on, in the session, the client

communicated that in the first year of her engagement with her ex-partner, she found out he was cheating on her. She explained how she was “just going through the motions” and felt like “they weren’t even really friends.”

The client’s mother was also brought up. She said she has a strenuous relationship with her alcoholic mother. During the session, the client had mentioned that her father left her family at a young age. Her mother was the only parent somewhat around. She mentioned how she would try to speak to her mother about her problems, but her mother was not emotionally there due to her excessive drinking.

At the beginning of the session, I had asked if she had seen other social workers before and to describe her experience with that. She stated how she felt like there were some social workers who gave genuine attention towards her needs, but some felt like “they were just doing their job.” Due to what she has experienced in the past I sensed that she had developed trust issues.

Despite her lack of trust, she seemed determined to strengthen her skills in order to provide a better life for her kids. She proved this by highlighting her past achievements of working at a daycare provider. She also said that she wanted to eventually homeschool her children, but she needed to overcome her custody battle with her ex-partner first. The client expressed her love for her children throughout the session. She stated, “they are the reason that I do what I do and are the reason I wake up in the morning.” This showed the importance of her kids in her life.

With all of these factors in mind, there are many things can happen that may impede her progress towards her goals. Without financial stability, full custody of her kids, and a permanent place to stay, she may not be able to accomplish her goals. The client is ambitious and would like to accomplish many goals to become independent. But there are many elements that can affect the timeframe she wishes to be on. If she gets full custody of her children, she will come across the

issue of being a single mother raising two kids. The client would have to take on the role of the caretaker and breadwinner. Along with that she would have to make enough money to sustain herself as well as two kids. The client has not worked since she had kids and her eldest is 10 years old. Due to the large gap in her resume, it may be hard to find an employer that hires people with minimum to no experience that will be sufficient for her to make a living. She may also come across unequal pay. The gender pay gap still exists and she may not be compensated for the same work as a man. With that in mind, I would have to guide her through these stages and connect her to the appropriate resources to help her succeed.

Social Learning Theory

The Social Learning theory is the concept where behaviors are learned through observation. In this theory children pay special attention to important figures. These include parents, older siblings, TV characters, or friends (McLeod,2016.) “Children pay attention to some of these people (models) and encode their behavior. At a later time, they may imitate (i.e., copy) the behavior they have observed” (McLeod,2016.) Once these behaviors are expressed then others around them may determine whether or not that behavior should be reinforced or rejected.

In regard to the client’s problem, her children experienced a “terrible environment” and would watch their parents argue and get physical with one another. Being that her kids observed this trauma, they may try to imitate that later on in life with others. The client was aware of this issue, she proved that by expressing how she speaks to her eldest son on how he should treat others and to not follow his dad’s example. That may be confusing for a ten-year-old to be told one thing but observe contradicting behavior. As for her 3-year-old, she did not advise her like she did with her eldest, but the negative behaviors may develop subconsciously. I was concerned with the behavior the children observed so during the planning process I suggested her to involve her

children in Big Brothers & Big Sisters of America. That way the kids are able to interact and talk to others their age that are not involved in the conflicts back home.

Ethics and Values

There are two social work values that stood out to me when assessing this client. These included importance of human relationships and dignity and worth of a person. With these values “Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of a person” and “Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships” (NASW, 2020). These principles mean that as social workers, we must treat others with respect and be attentive to the cultural differences there may be. In order to address clients effectively social workers should be able to improve the client’s attributes so that they can become self-sufficient in society. Social workers must also encourage homeostasis between the client’s relationships. Strengthening relationships can help enhance the process in reaching the clients goal.

Towards the end of this session, I had provided the client with several resources that showed these two ethical principles in action. After listening to the client’s story on fleeing her domestic abuse relationship, based on previous research, I highlighted how women who have experienced traumatic experiences have found a sense of purpose by getting a job. Connecting the client with the tools to get a job would allow her to not only provide for her family but also increase her self-esteem. Secondly, I suggested for her to go to a domestic violence support group at the organization Partnership for Families, Children, and Adults. A support group would help the client relate to other people and make her feel like she is not alone. At Partnership for Families, Children, and Adults, she may be able to develop a connection with more people and expand her support groups. I also suggested for her to take her kids to the Big brothers and Sisters of America. Due to the abuse the children observed they may want to process and express their feelings through

recreational activities. Although the client does have a great relationship with her children, interacting with people around their age may help them develop emotionally and socially.

Personal Biases and Client Feedback

Helping a client navigate through their problems can cause some personal biases to arise. While I did practice with pseudo clients most of the semester, I still felt nervous during this session. I was anxious and overlooked certain obvious issues like the client avoiding talking about how she was feeling versus her children. Being told multiple problems can be overwhelming and choosing a starting point can be tricky. I struggled with providing empathy because there were so many factors involved in the story that I wanted to touch base on. I think that due to me being overwhelmed with the client's problem, I was not able to pick up on the lack of empathy I was providing. During the assessment process I found myself skipping ahead and already knowing what my client's problem was because of the referral I had received prior. But I was surprised to see that there were more issues in the session than what was displayed in the referral sheet.

After the session the social worker gave me feedback on my performance on the interview session. She expressed how I was easy to talk to and would be a great future mental health counselor. On the other hand, she did mention that I should work on making deeper connections with the events that happened during the session. There were a few important factors that I overlooked and could have delve more into. I accepted the feedback with respect and took note of for the next time I am interviewing another pseudo client.

Overall, I think that this case simulation gave me a different outlook on how I will approach clients in the future. I have analyzed my responses and the interactions I had with the client. I have concluded that I need to be well prepared and have no expectations. Concentrating on what the client's problem is as well as the underlying problem is a technique that I will continuously work

on. I was happy to be given the opportunity to interview a social worker and get the feedback I needed to improve my skills. I believe that by allowing myself to stay in the role of a student I can continue to enhance my ways on providing genuine service to my clients. With the knowledge I gained from this case analysis I hope to be able to apply it in my studies and my future as a social worker.

References

Mcleod, S. A. (2016, February 05). Albert Bandura - Social Learning Theory. Retrieved December 01, 2020, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>

National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2020). Retrieved December 01, 2020, from <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>