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Desire for equality, empathy for individuals, and the understanding that life experiences effect the decision making process, are values that have led me to pursue social work as a profession. Considering the question, 'Do I feel social work is a calling?' I would answer yes. It is my belief that my own personal life experiences have led me to the field of social work. My calling is based on the survival of issues that was forced upon me at an early age. I believe that through this survival, I have gained wisdom, understanding and empathy. All of which, will allow me to be an effective advocate for individuals, families and groups.

The most positive and attractive aspect of social work, in my opinion, is the ability to help individuals reach their own personal goals. Many individuals are still "taking flowers to the grave of past injustices". The previous statement, made in a recent class, had a serious impact on me. I realized that I was unknowingly doing the same thing. It will be rewarding to assist individuals deal with past 'transgressions' and provide them with tools they can utilize to meet their own personal goals. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the most negative and adverse aspect of social work, is the struggle and great effort required to fight existing policies. Often our society creates the issues, like poverty, and then punishes individuals for being victims of social injustices.

It is understandable that the choice of social work as a career will have both positive and negative influences on different aspects of my life. My family will be impacted in a positive way due to my understanding of family systems and how they work. My choice of career will no doubt have influences, both positive and negative, on

my friendships and social activities. As I begin working, I will have much less time to pursue my own personal interests. My participation in many social activities will no doubt be less than it is currently. My health and stress level may also be affected by a career in social work. The stressful environment in which many social workers find themselves involved is inevitable. It is imperative to remember to take care of my emotional well-being if I want to be effective working in this particular field.

It is my hope that my choice of a career in social work will have a positive impact on my journey to find spirituality. Spirituality is something that I am actively pursuing. It is often difficult for me to differentiate between spirituality and the religious intolerance with which I have encountered in the past. Currently formed friendships with individuals of a spiritual nature that are also able to offer tolerances toward differences, have led to the belief that my chosen career will have a positive impact on my spiritual life. It is my understanding that the gay and lesbian population is very well represented in the social work field. I believe this will allow me to more easily have a sense of belonging.

What I have learned about myself during the practicum that confirms my choice of social work as the right profession for me would be that the values set forth in the NASW code of ethics and my own personal code of ethics are very much intertwined. Social workers are concerned with social problems, their causes, their solutions and their human impacts. Social workers work with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Social work is the profession committed to the pursuit of social justice, to the enhancement of the quality of life, and to the development of the full potential of each individual, group and community in society.

I have no particular desire to work with a program that serves any particular language, ethnic or religious group. However, I do feel that my “calling” is to work with the aging population. While at my field placement, I am amazed that I learn something new everyday. I truly feel this population is under utilized. Unfortunately, American society places a significant emphasis on youth and beauty. I look at the wasted resources that have not been utilized, i.e. the knowledge and life experience of this special population.

I am aware that I will need to undertake specific self-care activities to maintain my energy, passion, optimism and commitment to the field of social work. My future plans for taking care of myself include: searching for a personal meaning to spirituality, more self-reflection, remembering to schedule time to rest and developing better tools to cope with stress. Social work does have a high rate of burn-out in specific areas like geriatrics and child welfare. It is also true that social work offers many different populations with which one may work. It has been said that social workers are needed to support individuals from cradle to grave.

After five years of experience and employment as a social worker, I plan to have completed my MSW degree and continuing my work to support the aging population. It is my desire that after fifteen years of experience, I would still be working to support the older population. It would be preferable that I would be functioning as a department head, possibly at the state level, with Adult Protective Services. After twenty years, my plans are to continue to provide services to the aging population. At this point, I would like to have the opportunity to teach in the field of social work. I imagine it would be

very rewarding to prepare the next generation of social workers to continue the fight against oppression and injustice.

In conclusion, the impact I hope to make with my work is to leave this world a better place for the next generation. It is also my sincere hope that I will have touched the lives of the people with which I work and support in a positive way. At the end of the day, I hope my work results in a successful journey of assisting individuals reach their personal goals.