

A long way gone:  
memoirs of a boy  
soldier essay sample



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This paper will explore how individuals in the novel, *A long way gone: Memoirs of a boy soldier* interact at various systems levels. It will also identify how social conflict, oppression, war and poverty affect these relationships. The reader will discuss how the relationships offer members with a sense of identity, strength, resilience and support. The essay will explore how their families, groups, and communities help to address issues of oppression in their lives. The reader will review the NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice.

The Reader will determine how Self Awareness, Cross Cultural Knowledge and Service Delivery guide their social work practice in working with the population throughout the novel. The paper will provide information on how the NASW Code of Ethical Standards will assist the client systems described in the assigned book. Ishmael Beah, the main character in the novel interacts with many various system levels. This includes his family, groups, communities and organizations.

For example, While Ishmael is running from the war he interacts with the rebels who are bringing horror and death to civilians in the villages (Beah, 2007). While he interacts with the rebels, Ishmael is put in immediate danger for they may kill him at any given time. The rebels instill fear in Ishmael throughout his journey. (Beah, 2007). Ishmael interacts with his family through out the novel. He has a loving relationship with his mother, father, grandmother and brother. Ishmael explains to the reader of a fond memory he has of his grandmother. He states:

I walk around the village by myself and found a hammock on one of the verandahs. I lay in it, swinging slowly to get my thoughts in motion. I began to think about the times when I visited my grandmother and I would sleep in the hammock at the farm. I would wake up staring into her eyes as she played with my hair. She would tickle me and then hand me a cucumber to eat. As I was thinking of these things, I fell out of the hammock. I was too lazy to get up, so I sat on the ground and thought about my two brothers, my father, mother, and grandmother.

I wished to be with them. Ishmael's experience with both of the system levels held a negative and positive impact on his life (Beah, 2007). Social conflict, oppression, war and poverty affect the relationships of Ishmael and others within this novel. For example, Ishmael and many other civilians were separated from family and friends during the war. Ishmael states, " I pressed my fingers on my eye lids to hold back my tears and wished that I could have my family together again. " (Beah, 2007, p. 45) From this stemmed sadness and oppression for Ishmael and other civilians.

The relationships between the elders and the children in the village were destroyed due to social conflict from the war. The elders in the villages did not trust the children. Ishmeal explains, " People were terrified of boys our age. Some had heard rumors about young boys being forced by rebels to kill their families and burn their villages (Beah, 2007, p. 37). " People stopped trusting each other. Poverty that stemmed from the war also affected relationships. This war gave children and adults no choice but to steal from people, and houses (Beah, 2007).

Although the relationship between the children and the adults were unpleasant, many of them still provided members with a sense of identity, strength, resilience and support. Ishmeal came in contact with a few civilians of his village multiple times in the novel. The civilians knew of Ishmael because of his family name and reputation. This provided Ishmeal with a sense of identity. He understood who and where he belonged too. This sense of identity granted him with resiliency. Stories passed down from ancestors provided strength. The stories were told as it pertained to the situation present at a particular time.

For example, stories told of the Bra spider and the story about the notorious hunter who transformed himself into a wild pig offered advice and comfort for the boys (Beah, 2007). The massive amounts of drugs, war movies, and violence seen on a daily basis forced Beah to become a mindless killer at the age of fifteen. His saving grace was the release out of the army. UNICEF took Ishmael to a shelter in the capital of Sierra Leone, Freetown, where he and several other child soldiers were to be rehabilitated (Beah, 2007). This rehabilitation center provided assistance on how to address issues of oppression in their lives.

Once the drugs wore off, reality set in and the pain, suffering and loss that they endured rose to the surface of their minds. Ishmael was able to form relationships with others during his stay. He formed a relationship with a Nurse named Esther who helped him immensely during his stay. To form a healthy relationship with another human being was a positive milestone for Ishmeal. The NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work

Practice (National Association of Social Workers, 2007) will help guide my <https://assignbuster.com/a-long-way-gone-memoirs-of-a-boy-soldier-essay-sample/>

future social work practice in working with the population of my assigned novel.

Social workers are required to be culturally aware of their own heritage to become culturally aware of the heritage of others (National Association of Social Workers, 2007). Self awareness will decrease biases while speaking with this population. The Self Awareness standard states, “ As one develops the diversity within one’s own group, one can be more open to the diversity within other groups” (National Association of Social Workers, 2007). The Cross Cultural Knowledge standard will provide my practice with an understanding of the impact of culture, behavior, values, and the social services that are provided to the diverse population.

Through the Service Delivery standard, my future practice will hold knowledge in regards to recourses and services available to clients of a diverse population. “ Social workers need to detect and prevent exclusion of diverse clients from service opportunities and seek to create opportunities for clients ” (National Association of Social Workers, 2007). The NASW Code of Ethical standards will assist me with the clientel described throughout the novel. The standard of choice would be physical contact. Physical contact may result in psychological harm to the client.

The client system in the novel experienced crisis on a daily basis, and if touched may trigger a negative reaction out of the patient (National Association of Social Workers, 1999). After completion of the assignment and assigned novel, I am knowledgable about the topic of reciliancy. Very few individuals are capable of exhibiting resiliancy once they experience a crisis.

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An individual may not lead a normal life due to war or a negative environment. Ishmael was a child out of thousands who revealed signs of hope and resiliency (Beah, 2007).

Oppression and trauma did not enable him to form relationships with strangers. Ishmael is a role model for children living in crisis and poverty. I have learned that with the help of social workers, services and groups within the community people will begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel. The rehabilitation centers vision was to provide the children with the tools to obtain a normal childhood and upbringing. This novel illustrates how important and crucial the role of social work is to better the lives of civilians around the world.