*Student Learning Objective I: Foundations of Child Development*

*Students will demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical and empirical foundations of the discipline.*

Throughout my time in the various courses in the Child Development Program I have learned about countless theorists and theories pertaining to child development. With the information I have learned regarding theorists and theories I was able to relate what I learned in the classroom to life in the real world. Having the opportunity to work with children while completing my degree in Child Development has given me a unique experience of being able to see the theories I learned in the classroom and how they directly relate to children. My experiences inside and out of the Child Development Program has shaped who I am as a person today and who I am going to be as a future teacher.

There are many theories that I believe have influenced how I see human behavior. Erik Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development has taught me about the stages of human development, broken down from birth to 18 years of age. In each stage a person is dealing with individual crises, for example stage one is infancy to one and a half years old and the child is dealing with trust vs. mistrust. I work with children from three-to-five years old who are going through the autonomy vs. shame and the initiative vs. guilt stage. Looking back on Erikson’s theory the children’s actions make a lot more sense. The children would always want to do things themselves and the children who were around four-to-five years old would assert themselves more, meaning they would go about things with initiative and control.

Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory was eye opening to me. The theory states that behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observing. Children are constantly watching adult’s behaviors and adults act as models, even if they don’t realize it. Before I was in the Child Development Program I knew children learned from adults but I never realized that children encode the observed behavior, imitate the behavior, and then children receive positive or negative reinforcements from adults. After learning about the Social Learning Theory it seemed so obvious to me, it made me really question my actions around children.

Before I had experience and knowledge about child development and families I paid little attention the dynamic between a child and their family. Relating to the Social Learning Theory children pick up on almost everything their parents do. After observing children and their families I have noticed children are very similar to their parents and I believe this is because of the Social Learning Theory. Before my child development courses I knew there were different ways to parent, but I was unaware of how much the children will be affected by them. The authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles directly affect and determine a child’s behavior. When I see parents with their children I can identify cues of each parenting style and it is interesting to see as the children get older how much they are still affected by their parents.

There are two main philosophies that will guide my work with children in the future. The constructivist theory is important to me because I plan on instilling this theory in my classroom when I become a teacher. I believe children learn from their environment and they learn through doing, those two aspects are what the constructivist theory focuses on. Lev Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development, along with scaffolding will play a major part in my future with children. I have used the philosophy of scaffolding and using a child’s ZPD to help them learn a new skill. For example, when teaching a young child how to put on their jacket and zip it up I observed what they could do without assistance, and then I scaffold them the rest of the way until they were able to put on and zip up their jacket.

I would like to continue to grow in the Foundations of Child Development by doing in depth studies on every child development theory. There are so many theories and there are intricate aspects of each theory, it would be amazing to be an expert on each theory. I would also love to observe each theory in action when working with children.

In Psychology of Teaching, my assignment was to create a theoretical outline regarding a theorist and their theory. I created a lesson plan that involves the theory and I chose Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences. For this assignment it was required of me to have extensive knowledge regarding the chosen theory. In order to design a lesson plan based of the theory I needed to know key ideas of the theory, application to practice, and outcomes of the students. I now feel as if I could create a lesson plan with reference to various other theories.

In a Child Development class titled, Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum, we were asked to write a reflective piece regarding theory, practice, and philosophy. In this assignment I described Jean Piaget as the theorist who relates to my personal philosophy the most. This assignment documents my knowledge in the foundations of Child Development because I identified my philosophy and then listed theories that aligned with and supported my personal viewpoint.