*SLO V. Critical Thinking*

*Students will apply critical thinking and scientific methods of thinking (including logical and empirical reasoning) to issues regarding children’s well-being.*

 College is the time to develop skills needed to critically think about different issues around the world. Critical thinking means to question things and to make reasoned, clear judgments regarding topics. Growing up, many people are told to believe all that professionals and superiors say. Many people’s beliefs are skewed by the media and different sources throughout the community. My courses and experiences in college have taught me to challenge these beliefs and to not trust everything that I hear. I have learned that much of what is expressed in the public is inaccurate and that critical reasoning is necessary when making decisions both personally and professionally.

 Within the Child Development field, it is necessary to be able to think critically and scientifically about different scenarios involving children and their families. Every family is different and these differences need to be recognized in order to make decisions and provide services. This field is difficult to pursue because you are often faced with vulnerable families in dangerous situations and it is your job to make important decisions and choose the option that best suits their needs. Logical reasoning is a skill that I have developed throughout my time in this major as I have gained the ability to question things and decide on action.

 In order to gather information about a child or a family, scientific methods of thinking are essential to implement in order to receive and analyze the information. Empirical reasoning is a skill needed when observing families, children, and the environment. Much of the information gathered about families and children is through observation. Throughout my time at California State University, Chico, I have spent many hours in the observation room in the Child Development laboratory. I have not only learned how to be objective when observing but also how to use different techniques to gather information. Through completing the Desired Results Developmental Profile on a child in the preschool school room on the Chico State campus, I have acquired the empirical skills needed to look for a variety of developmental abilities and transform these observations into future goals and activities in order to enhance development.

 My internships have also allowed me to critically think about environments that are vastly different from mine as a child. I have had to be open-minded and willing to learn about different circumstances. Through my internship at Butte Baby Steps, I have had to critically think and indulge in home environments that vary greatly from the norm that I have been accustomed to. This is something that I struggled with because it was hard for me to understand some of the situations that I observed. I had to learn to be nonjudgmental and address my biases in some of the environments. This opportunity allowed me to see other ways of living and the need for societal change in the community.

 Theories that I have been exposed to in my coursework have allowed me to work with children in the most optimal way by implementing research into practice. I was directly exposed to the scientific process through the implementation of an inquiry in the preschool room where I made observations and implemented props and materials in the dramatic play area that would entice the boys in the classroom. I collected data throughout the course of the semester and presented my findings to the community. I learned a lot through this experience and am comfortable in my ability to critically think and evaluate criteria in different situations. As a member of the child development profession, I can observe and evaluate families and offer advice and services that would benefit them in the most optimal way. I can critically think about a variety of information and make my own judgments and assumptions about them based on research and evidence. I have the ability to apply theory to practice and evaluate implementation through data gathering techniques. Overall, my college career has greatly prepared me to deal with families and children in difficult, unfamiliar situations.