*SLO III. Developmental Context*

*Students will demonstrate knowledge of the multiple environmental contexts in which children grow and develop, and will be able to analyze systems that support children’s well-being.*

The multiple environmental contexts in which children grow and develop can be best represented and illustrated by Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Model. Children’s multiple environmental contexts such as home, school, culture, society, and neighborhood are all classified into five systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronsystem. Every experience I have had working with children helps me understand the varying but interconnecting environmental contexts in which children grow and develop. Through my experiences working with children in a classroom or school setting, I am able to contribute to their development through interacting with them and engaging in activities with them that foster different aspects of development. While working with children in a classroom setting, I am very familiar and in touch with this specific area of their development.

During my experiences working at preschools or child care centers, I have developed some understanding of children’s other environmental contexts such as their home and neighborhood. Even though I did not have complete insight to their home or neighborhood, I received information from the parents. This information helped me imagine what the child’s home and their neighborhood would look like in regards to their environmental context. One thing I learned the most about was the importance of consistency across all of the systems and environmental contexts. For example, if parents are working with a child on potty training at home, the teachers at the child’s school should also be following the same procedures as the parents do at home. This consistency helps children feel safe and secure through all of the environmental contexts in their lives.

The aspect of environmental contexts that has surprised me the most is how influential the chronosystem can be on a child’s development. The chronosystem is the outermost layer of the ecological systems model and therefore, farthest away from the individual child. This system includes sociohistorical events such as war, tragedies such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks or natural disasters. When viewing environmental contexts, I tend to think of school, home and neighborhood first while neglecting important environmental influences that affect the child. However, the chronosytem and the sociohistorical events included in the system, can affect the child’s outlook on society and perspective of his or her culture.

Being a life long learner, I will continue to educate myself on environmental contexts as they evolve and change at the same time as our society and culture change. I will become more aware of my community environment by reading newspapers and watching the news. I have learned the importance of environmental contexts on children’s development through my experiences working with children and from my child development courses. I have also learned about different cultural influences and their influence on a child’s development through a cross-cultural psychology course I took. It was interesting to learn about different cultural influences and how they differed from my own cultural influences.

The first assignment that has helped me develop a deeper understanding for environmental contexts is the Individual Case Study that I completed during the Observational Techniques course. This assignment required students to choose a target child and complete an analysis on certain areas of their development. I included the part of the case study that focused on my target child’s social and emotional development. This assignment helped me learn about my target child’s interactions with peers, teachers and parents. Even though I only observed the child in the same environmental context, I was able to observe them participating in a variety of different interactions and developmental contexts. For example, I observed them exhibiting solitary play, cooperative play, interacting with a teacher, interacting with a parent and interacting with one other peer. My target child was exposed to different interactions with different individuals, therefore, learning in different developmental contexts.

The second assignment that helped me develop a deeper understanding for environmental contexts was the Research Proposal in the Methods of Inquiry course for child development. I completed my research proposal on the effects of lesbian parenting on the psychological development of their children. This assignment helped me analyze different family structures and how they influenced their child’s development. After examining past research done on the subject, it was apparent that children of lesbian parents faced discrimination and criticism in schools and in society. Children are affected by their family structure at home, at school, and in society. This helps verify that each of the environmental context systems are interconnected based on their place in the child’s life.