Reflective Narrative: 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.

I have learned through my experiences that children’s environments are essential to their development and overall well-being. My experiences in my courses and internships at Chico State University has introduced me to Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory in which studies the relationship of an individual and his or her surroundings. It is through this model that I have learned individual characteristics such as child gender, health status, and cognitive abilities impact children’s development. But, in addition to these individual characteristics, other environmental factors such as community and culture also play a huge role in supporting children’s growth and well-being. My personal experience in how individual characteristics and environment influence development is presented in a poem I wrote for a women’s studies course. In this poem I identify developmental context such as my gender, cultural influences, social-emotional influences, in addition to personal relationships that have shaped me into who I am today.

One important aspect of developmental context I have developed is an interest in gender. I find this aspect to be one of the most influential factors in how a child is going to grow up in our society. An assignment for my children’s gender and sexuality development course made the distinction of what makes a boy and what makes a girl in this world very apparent just through the display of toys. This assignment highlighted for me the influence of the media in socializing children into following gender specific roles and the potentially harming consequences for children who may not follow these gender norms.

# However, of all of the things I learned regarding developmental context, the thing that surprises me the most is how resilient children can be in the face of adversity. One of the most relevant examples that I am reminded of is I think about adversity is of the children of the Appalachia, filmed in the 20/20 documentary, *A Hidden America: Children of the Mountains.* These children are a prime example of resilience and hope despite the numerous risk factors they must face on a daily basis.

# Being a life-long learner, I will continue to grow in my knowledge of individual differences and environmental impact. Through introspection I will continue to grow as a person and hope I have a positive rather than negative influence on someone else’s life. I want to learn the uniqueness of each child and person to figure out how best to fulfill their potential.