SLO I. Foundations of Child Development

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

The first Student Learning Objective (SLO) in Child Development is the core foundation for most of the assignments completed, and it is crucial that students understand the foundations of this discipline prior to progressing into more advanced courses. Throughout my higher education experience, I have learned about several different theorists and theories that address how children learn and develop. These theories influence my future in therapy with children because I can easily access past studies, research, and theories on certain disorders to go about serving and educating families with early intervention practices and Occupational Therapy.

I have grown tremendously within the area of Foundations of Child Development and have expanded my knowledge of theories and research. The courses I took over the last four years have expanded and reintroduced the same theorists and theories to help me generalize and incorporate their principles in my work. The Baumrind Theory of Parenting Styles has helped me understand human behavior and family dynamics. Before working as an early interventionist, I didn’t fully understand how influential the parents’ behavior and temperament is for the child. As my experience progressed in this field, I was able to see the full affect of Authoritative, Permissive and Authoritarian parenting styles with children I’ve worked with. I’ve been able to meet parents where they are at, in order to better understand how to help the child within their environment and see how they’re being raised. Observing children and family behavior has changed my views of children and families because I have learned the importance of not changing how a family operates, but instead joining them and meeting them half way in order to give the child the best situation possible based on their everyday experiences. Whether I specifically agree with those experiences or not, it is crucial as a professional in this field to observe, and then intervene and incorporate their family norms into my work in order for the child to benefit fully when I’m not present.

Aside from the Parenting Styles Theory, the Attachment Theory of John Bowlby has guided my practice and will continue to be applied in my future work. Certain behaviors revealed by children can be characterized by the quality of their early attachment relationships with caregivers. I have applied my understanding of attachment in my work with Infants primarily because I have been able to directly see those children who are rejected by a care-giver and therefore avoidant or openly loved by a caregiver and therefore secure. This has allowed me to maneuver what activities I bring out for the children and how to fulfill each child’s needs based on their attachment styles with primary caregivers. I would like to grow in the area of Foundations of Child Development by learning more about theories on children who have special needs primarily whether that is behavioral or developmental. I want to learn about parent-child relationships to then assess how parenting styles differ with a child who is developmentally delayed.

The first assignment that represents my growth and knowledge within this particular SLO is an analysis from the book Lost Boy, which was a required read for a Sociology class. The book focused on a child who was born into a polygamist family within a polygamist cult ran by his sexually abusive uncle. This young boys memoir is shaped around the idea of basic foundations for Child Development and how a child is deeply affected by their environment, caregivers, and society in itself. I learned about how challenging it is for a child to escape an environment that they grew up in when it’s all they’ve ever known, and how damaging to their internal working models of self and others. This book made me realize that there are different extremes within the Foundation of Child Development and theories will have to be altered and applied on a case-to-case basis.

The next assignment that helped me expand my knowledge of this SLO was from the Marriage and Family Relationships course where we had to reflect on a DVD based on spanking. Before watching this DVD presentation, I was unaware of the detrimental affects that spanking as a practice has on a child and their attachment with their caregiver. This reflection based on spanking opened my eyes to wanting to educate and work directly with parents and families to offer resources and alternatives to practicing spanking. This paper fits in with the SLO 1 because it demonstrates how the Foundations of Child Development and child’s attachment behaviors can be greatly influenced based on how a parent disciplines them, because that is what they’re observing and how they’re learning. I have been able to dig deeper into what parenting style usually incorporates spanking and why, as well as seeing how it affects the parent-child relationship when fear is presented. I want to expand my knowledge and continue researching and exploring new theories and empirical foundations to better my work in this field and bring awareness and knowledge to families and children.