*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.*

I have had many experiences to facilitate my growth in the area of environmental contexts in which children grow and develop. I have had the opportunity throughout my classes to learn about different environments where children have lived in or had to grow up in. One of the classes that really facilitated my growth in this area was Children in a Changing World. I had no concept of some of the conditions that children lived in or had to go through. One of our assignments was to watch a documentary called *Half Sky* and then write a paper about what the women were experiencing. We saw young girls becoming involved in sex trafficking and the horrible living conditions these girls were forced into. This assignment really opened my eyes because of the privilege I have been given as an American woman not to have to go through a similar experience or even know anyone who had to go through a similar experience.

I was an intern in a preschool-aged classroom last semester and I was also able to see children who come from a variety of different backgrounds and environments. This enhanced my experience for this learning objective because I have not had much experience with children whose language isn’t primarily English or with children whose families struggle to provide for them. It was really awesome to be able to bring all these children together and see the children teaching each other and myself about their environment and where they come from based on activities they like to do or things they like to talk about.

The one thing I learned the most about is that children are put horrible situations and there is nothing they can do but try to survive. I think that I have lived a sheltered life and I had no knowledge of what children in developing countries have to go through on a daily basis. Children in a Changing World opened my eyes beyond my own country to become knowledgeable about what goes on in other countries. I do think it’s our responsibility to help children in those unfortunate situations because no one else is going to take a stand. I know if I was in their situation and I knew other people had the means and education to help me, I would want their help. One of the most important things is to educate others about the poor living conditions of children in this world. Knowledge is power and we cannot change anything if we are not aware. As a Child Development major, I found that one of the most important things is to pass our knowledge onto others. Without it, all the people in the world will keep going on and living their lives without even thinking that there are children being made into sex slaves or forcing to work at young ages and even being abused physically, verbally, and emotionally. We are just as bad as the people doing horrible things to these children if we do not spread our knowledge of the horrible environments and do something to help them. That just means that we are enabling others to keep getting away with what they are doing to these children who never had a choice or a chance without our help.

As a life-long learner, I will continue to educate myself not only about the children in my own country but also about the children in other countries as well. I think that it was a lucky chance that I was born into my family and into this country. However, children in third-world countries and in poor living environments even in this country were dealt an unlucky hand. I want to push myself as a learner to know more and to also spread that information. Children living in poor environments are right under our nose every day and there is no one to help them. They are simply just trying to survive with their families and sometimes that’s just not enough. If we are not educated or aware that there are problems in our own communities then how can we fix problems? As a learner, I will continue to spread the awareness because sometimes it only takes a few people to make a big difference in the lives of children. The littlest efforts can save the lives of children or even give them hope to keep pushing forward in a life that seems hopeless.

One thing I have struggled with while learning about different environments of children is the abuse that children go through at the hands of their parents. In my class, Children in a Changing World, we had the opportunity to read a book and write a paper reflecting on it. For me, my book was *A Child Called It* and this book changed my life while breaking my heart at the same time. I think that there are way more children that go through heavy abuse at the hands of their parents. It has been a struggle for me to learn about because part of me didn’t want to believe that this is actually happening in our world. Part of me did not want to think that someone could torment, malnourish, and do the horrific things that were done to the child in this book. It’s been a struggle to me that there are people out there in this world having children and just abusing them because they have no control in their own life so they want to make children feel as miserable or worse than they do. I think that’s important that we open our eyes to this abuse because this type of abuse can kill children and if we are aware of it but not doing anything to help, we are just as guilty. Children are the core of any career I will be moving forward with and I think it’s my duty to help give them a chance to live a good life and provide any help I can to remove them from horrible situations that are endangering their lives.