

### ***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.*

#### **Individual Outline**

This SLO deals with the knowledge of how contexts affect and influence children's development. Context includes individual or sociohistorical factors such as socio-economic status, culture, gender, location, or time period. Children's contexts in which they develop are shown to be highly influential to their development. Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is a theory used to organize these contexts based on their proximity and relationship to the child.

Understanding children's context may be the most important and most valuable thing that I have learned in the Child Development major. Understanding and interpreting different factors and contexts has contributed to my ability to view a child as a whole person, not merely a student. Training in this area has also contributed to my ability to understand factors that have shaped me and understand that others are not shaped by the same factors. For example, I am a man and I can expect to experience things differently than a woman.

I am someone who is passionate about seeing and learning from different contexts. This has largely been shaped by my visits to Haiti, and why I continue to do so. Classes such as Children in a Changing World and Professional Seminar in Child Development: Current Issues have given me academic knowledge on how to interpret and understand other contexts, particularly as they relate to children. In the senior Child Development internship class, I interned in a setting where children did not have the resources of others to be successful. Here, I worked to understand and support these

children's development and to inspire them to consider college. Here, I witnessed what school was like for these children.

I think what challenges me most about the diversity in children's experiences is how hopeless things can seem. Because so many factors are at play in children, and we exist in systems that don't always support children's development, it is hard to see how a worker can make a difference. However, resiliency research indicates that even one positive adult influence can have profound positive impacts on a child's development. I have learned, through my personal and professional development, that we all have a part to play in society and that we should focus on being the best we can in that field.

I have struggled with relating to people who have had vastly different experiences than I have. I worry that in speaking and working with individuals, I will somehow offend them by appearing insensitive and ignorant. I want to listen and understand people before speaking.

My understanding of developmental contexts will guide my professional practice in understanding and respecting children as whole people, with entirely different worldviews and experiences than myself. Their biases will be different than mine. My understanding in this area will guide me in being slow to judge others, and look for solutions to problems rather than blame others.

I will continue my professional development in this area by learning from and listening to others. I will continue to work to understand my biases and how they affect me in order that I can learn to teach all people. I will also keep an open mind as I grow professionally, in order that I might learn new resources to work with special populations.

## **Assignments**

For this portion of the assignment, I will discuss my growth in this SLO between assignments. The first assignment was for Children in a Changing World, as mentioned above. This assignment required that I read a book about a person from a different context and apply class material in my analysis. The author of the book I read, Donna Williams, experienced severe abuse and neglect from her family that stemmed from her diagnosis of Autism. In the paper, I related this to Attachment Theory, and concluded that Williams had experienced poor attachment early in life. I also discussed Family Stress theory, a formula used to predict a family's coping ability with stress. I concluded that the time period Williams grew up in (the 1960's) resulted in limited knowledge and awareness of Autism and sharply decreased her family's coping ability.

One year later, in Professional Seminar in Child Development: Current Issues, I wrote a factsheet about the importance of the first five years of a child's life and incorporated many sources. The factsheet was titled "5 things you need to know about children's health". This assignment served as a means of application and integration of sources and knowledge to advocate for children's health and covered a multitude of different topics, including milestones, risk factors, and early intervention.