**SLO 3 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.

This objective means having a better understanding of the wide variety of environments children are exposed to how children’s experiences and development are based on their environment. There are multiple systems that have a role in supporting children’s development, and I have learned how to examine them. Throughout my higher education experience I have grown in this area by understanding not all children are born with the same resources and opportunities. I have also learned to look at the systems involved in a child’s development before making any assumptions, as well as before deciding how to best support the child.

Internships I have done and classes I have taken facilitated my growth in understanding this learning objective. Learning about Uri Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model in multiple courses has helped me understand a more holistic view of children’s development. I was an intern at the Boys and Girls club, and I got experience working with children from a wide range of environmental contexts. For my Children in a Changing World course, I read a book and wrote a paper about children’s development, specifically in regards to their outdoor exposure.

One of the most surprising things I have learned in my higher education experience is how many children are living in developmental contexts with a large amount of risk factors. In my senior seminar course we read an article that discussed a specific risk factors that a family was faced with, and they claimed the numbers of families living in these environments are rising. Learning this has made me consider what career path I take. I find it fascinating that America, a country that is so powerful, has so many struggling families.

What I have wanted to know more about is what the most effective factor is that determines whether or not a child can break the cycle of a negative developmental context. I love working with children and my hope is to be one small piece of children’s lives that contributes to their success as a happy and healthy individual for the rest of their lives.

My understanding of developmental contexts will greatly impact my professional practice. No matter what career I have, I will be able to use my knowledge to help guide me through understanding why a child may be the way he or she is. From there I can better serve the children I am working with because I will have a greater understanding of their developmental context. In my senior seminar course we were able to use Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model to come up with a hypothetical family situation and decide what was included in each of the systems. This experience was great practice and will be applicable to my future career.

I will continue to grow in my understanding of developmental contexts by being exposed to multiple different families over time. I hope to get closer to families as a whole, not just the child, once I start working in the professional world. The more families I get to know and children I watch develop, the more I will understand developmental contexts.

Over two years ago I wrote a paper about my friend’s unplanned pregnancy and talked about the systems she had to support her. At the time, I did not have much knowledge on the Ecological Model. The paper I wrote was poorly written and did not go into much depth; however, it was my first time considering the external factors that go into someone’s developmental context.

In my Children in a Changing World course, I had the opportunity to read a book that greatly impacted the direction I will be going after I graduate. I have always loved the outdoors and working with children, and this book challenged me to pursue a career that combine the two. In my paper I describe the natural environment’s effect on children, as well as the home environments for children and why some children’s systems do not allow them to benefit from the outdoors. This paper shows my growth in writing, as well as understanding child development on a deeper level.