

### **Reflective Narrative 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.*

**Narrative Purpose:** This student learning objective reflects on upon positive influences such as stable relationships and negative influences such as poor role models that are within a child's environment during their development. This student outcome examines how all of these influences are intertwined with one another, whether it be short or long term.

I have many experience of my growth within this student learning objective. I would say that learning about the environmental influences in classes such as my courses in child practicum, children in the changing world, marriage and families, and introduction to child development. When examining Bronfenbrenner's ecological system, one is able to see how certain factors can affect a child's development, even if it may be something subtle. For instance, in my children of the changing world class, we focused on the outside influences of children of other cultures such as child slavery and technology and its effects on children. I was able to go further into depth with this topic when I read a book about a little girl who became a part of child slavery. I also learned about environmental influences on a child's development in my marriage and families class by examining the different types of families and seeing how those factors affect a child's development. In introduction to child development, I was introduced to the concept of what the Bronfenbrenner's ecological system was. Also in my child practicum class, I was given the opportunity to sit in on a parent teacher conference and this allowed me to obtain real insight of the family structure while the child was at home.

Of all the things I learned in this area, the thing that challenges me the most is understanding how to help these children in certain situations when their environment is working against them. It is one thing to say that yes you should do this, but saying and doing something

about it are two totally different things. I find it sad how much poverty or any other negative environmental factor affects children and sometimes it is something that they can't help and are just born into. In situations like these, it fascinates me to hear about the resilient children who are able to overcome their difficult environmental situations such as a parent who does drugs and/or alcohol or a child who overcomes from the divorce of their parents. I learned about some of these factors in my adolescent development class where this can be a difficult age for most and can be a time where adolescents either begin to take on risky behavior or stay on the right path. I also learned about the environmental factors within my introduction to child development where I first learned about the Bronfenbrenner's ecological system and how each environment intertwines with one another and affects the child in a positive or negative manner

Something I appreciate from learning about developmental contexts is that understanding that there are a lot of programs and professionals who are willing to help. However I feel like it is a constant struggle of trying to make sure everyone has easy access to these programs to help them in their environments. For instance, if someone who lives in poverty may not have reliable transportation to get them to the help they need or have the proper education to understand that there is help out there. For instance in my professional seminar class, we went into depth on a lot of programs that are available and how one could promote those programs to people who would benefit from them. This opened my eyes to all of the opportunities that are available to people who really need the help. We did a lot of group work in that class, and it was nice to hear my other group member's ideas on how to promote these programs and what could be done so people had more access to them.

My understanding of developmental contexts will guide my professional practice in the following ways by understanding that every child's development is different and that even

something as small as where one lives, whether it may be living in a rural area vs the city, can have an affect on a child. I think that it is also good to remember that as a professional that you should not judge a child for their actions in the classroom such as acting out because you do not know how their environment is at home. What I mean by this, you do not know whether the family may be going through a divorce or are having financial problems which is bringing a lot of stress within the home. For instance if the child always seems tired in class or does not seem to be paying attention, you should try to find some way to fix the problem rather than getting angry at the child. I think that it is very helpful to ask questions and reach out to the child and let them know that you are there for them. As a professional, I think that it would be a good idea to constantly review the Bronfenbrenner's ecological model that I learned in my CHLD 250 class so that way I have a constant knowledge of how the model works and to have a better idea of how to help others by using it.

Being a life-long learner, I will continue to grow in my understanding of developmental contexts by always keeping a good understanding of how Bronfenbrenner's ecological system works. I think it is good to know how each one is intertwined with the one another (Mesosystem, microsystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem). In my opinion, I believe that continuing to build connections with children and their families is a good idea. That way they have a role model in their life and something they can trust when they are in need and need help or advice. I also think that in order to continue to be a lifelong learner one should always keep an open mind to a child and their family. Just because a child is acting out in class or is not paying attention does not mean they are defying you. I think it's a good thing to also keep a mental note in the back of your mind to dig deeper beyond the surface of the problem and see why the child may be doing what they are doing. I believe that in the long run if you put in

the effort to show the child and family that you care and are there to help when they need it, will not help build relationships, but possibly allow you to fix the problem or issue at hand.

## **Assignments**

In my children in the changing world class, I read a book about a little girl who was taken from her family and put into child slavery and then wrote a paper on what I had read. She lived in poverty in Africa. She was taken when a group of Arab men raided her village and burned down her village. Many people died while many of the children were abducted and put into child slavery. This little girl was taken and she had no idea whether her family survived the raid. On her way to the camp, she was raped by the Arab raider. She later finds out that they did from another girl who was abducted which gave her the desire to escape from child slavery. She becomes a servant in a few homes where she is mistreated and never paid for her work. She luckily escapes in the end, which is really rare because most of them end up there until they die. This is a good example of how one's ecological system has an effect on them. She was suppressed because of her skin and lived in poverty. Also because she was female, she was put to work in homes as a servant. She often went to bed without food which made it harder to work the next day. Before taking this class, I had no idea things like child slavery existed and that it continues happening every day. I feel like this assignment really opened my eyes to how one's environment plays a role in someone's life and that there are a lot more risks upon one's safety when they are living in more of a poor state. This was one of my first times using the Bronfenbrenner's ecological system in an assignment and I learned that an environment can affect you in a negative way as well.

In my child practicum, I was able to sit in on a parent teacher conference between a mother and one of the teachers within the Lilac room at the Associated Student Child Development Laboratory on the Chico State campus. In this assignment, I had to take notes during the meeting and reflect on what I had learned. In the meeting, the mother described how she does see changes in her son's behavior due to her husband being overseas. Hearing this kind of information explains so much because before this meeting, I had no understanding of why her son was acting out a lot in the classroom and would often not listen. The mother stated that her husband was planning to come back to surprise both of her sons during Memorial Day weekend and that she was excited to see their faces. I feel like this assignment really showed me that instead of focusing on the negative behaviors that the child is displaying, that I should focus on how to make the situation more positive for the child and find ways to make the child feel more comfortable. I am sure that when the mother is at home she is feeling stressed since she has to take care of two children while taking classes at Chico State. I feel like these parent teacher conferences are a good tool to have, that way the parent and the teacher are both on the same page and can brainstorm ideas on how to make tough transitions of not having one of your parents around easier on the child as well as the parent who is still there. I feel like this assignment was a good opportunity to have in understanding a child's environment and how to find ways to accommodate to the child's needs.