*SLO VI. Developmental Context*

*Students will understand the multiple child rearing contexts in which children grow and develop. Students will appreciate and interpret how social class, parents, families, peers, type of children's programs, culture, societal changes, and communities influence the course of development.*

After reading the above statement I begin thinking back on my higher education experience. When I first started my educational journey I thought my opinion on child rearing practices was the right one. I would look at families that I saw in grocery stores or other public places and wonder what they were thinking? I would see a mother yelling at her child or spanking their child in front of other people and would feel embarrassed for the child. As I began being educated on the topic of child development I found myself becoming more aware of the fact that most parent’s do not have the same educational background as I do.

I realize just how important I feel it is for new parents to take at least a class in parenting or even enroll themselves in an child development class. I understand now that I may have been judgmental before I was educated. I now understand that there are many different cultures that practice different types of child rearing. Although I may not agree or see certain cultures practices as the “right” way, I now understand that I must be open minded and understanding.

I once had the opportunity to sit in on a parent conference meeting which demonstrates my appreciation of differing cultural parenting. I was enrolled in an internship in the Associated Students Child Development Lab at Chico state. I was one of the teachers in the toddler room and as an assignment for the end of the semester I observed a parent teacher conference. Through this experience I learned that the child I had been working with all semester had so many things going on at home that I would never had known if I had not been involved in the conference. I learned that he was learning not only English, but Portuguese as well! It was interesting to hear how this particular child’s family has decided to raise him. I was able to connect the dots so to speak and understand the way the child’s behavior reflects his home life. I had a new appreciation for the child and his family as well as for the teacher who was conducting the conference. She was extremely open minded and also seemed to set the parent at ease which made for a great conference.

I also wrote a paper on the topic of co-sleeping which dove into controversial topic of whether or not it beneficial or harmful to have a child sleep with a parent. Before researching the topic of co-sleeping I did not see any real danger or benefit to where a child slept. Then as I researched I began to understand that it is not just a matter of where the parent puts the child to rest, there is a cultural practice involved as well. I realized that it is important to understand where many of the people who use co-sleeping as a cultural aspect were coming from.

I feel that sometimes I have such a big opinion on certain aspects of child rearing. My biggest struggle is to keep in mind that my belief system is going to be different than others and it is extremely important to be open minded. I have grown in this area. I feel that it’s important to spread my education to new parent’s or anyone who is interested in knowing more about children and their development, but I do need to make sure that I listen to them as well. There is so much more to learn in this field and I plan on continuing to learn, even outside of the school setting.