Reflective Summary

Sydney Garcia

Texas Woman's University

HDFS 5932.50 Capstone in HDFS

Dr. Elizabeth McCarroll

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As I near graduation and work towards compiling the most significant assignments I have completed during the M.S. in Child Life program at Texas Woman's University, I am reminded of all the effort I have devoted to my studies and how much I have grown because of it. Upon entering this program, I had a deep desire to support children and families facing illness and hospitalization. However, I lacked a clear understanding of how to translate my passion into an effective child life practice.

Through my studies, this has shifted as I learned the significance of development in influencing the way children and families experience and respond to the world around them. Assignments that have challenged me to assess development and apply my theoretical understanding led me to further appreciate the role of developmental theory as a tool to inform child life interventions. Furthermore, I have learned the value of integrating multiple theoretical perspectives into my philosophy as each offers a unique lens for understanding the needs of children and families as well as how to provide them support. The program's emphasis on research has also been central to the development of my child life philosophy as I have learned about my future professional responsibility of ensuring interventions are aligned with evidence-based practices. Through my growing understanding of theory, the importance of research, and professional practices gained through the M.S. in Child Life program, I now feel prepared to step into future child life roles knowing that I have the strong foundational knowledge necessary to support the psychosocial needs of pediatric patients and their families.

Though I had anticipated to be pushed academically through this program, I did not expect the personal growth that would come through self-reflection or the implications this

would have on me as a future professional. When I began my graduate studies, I recognized that my previous medical experiences were the main source of my interest in child life. However, I did not realize how this impacted my perspectives on healthcare or could lead to biases in the way I approached children and families. Through course readings and reflective assignments, I began to analyze my personal experiences through a developmental lens which led me to better understand my past responses and current views. This helped me to contextualize my experiences as unique to me and recognize the need to maintain self-awareness when identifying the needs of children and families. Though my personal experiences have been meaningful and can provide empathy for the challenges I plan to help individuals navigate, I now understand that it cannot serve as the framework I use in attempt to meet other's needs. Additionally, group assignments on topics, such as beliefs and customs, have led to further self-reflection on my responsibility of cultural humility to patients and families with differing views.

As I reflect on my time in the child life program at Texas Woman's, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity I have had to develop personally and professionally. Though my path through this program and to child life has not been easy, I feel a great sense of reward having stretched myself beyond what I believed I was capable. As move into the internship application process and later pursue child life roles, I am excited to carry forward the knowledge, skills, and abilities I have gained through this program. I would like to thank each of my professors whose assignments and feedback have helped me grow and develop into the professional I am becoming.