

Epilogue: Mapping Concepts of Contexts, Diversity, and Pathways Across Disciplines

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As part of the interdisciplinary MacArthur Research Network on Successful Pathways Through Middle Childhood, each chapter author in this volume presents a distinctive conceptual viewpoint on the overarching question of how contexts and diversity can be resources for pathways through middle childhood. The authors' distinctive theoretical perspectives span the social sciences, ranging from the "macro" levels of economics, social policies, and immigration histories to the "micro" events of children's choosing where to sit in their school lunchroom. This chapter aligns concepts of diversity, contexts, and pathways with major theories to show how each study in this volume contributes to ongoing evolution of each of these theories. Authors of several chapters link concepts from more than one theory to address their questions. In some cases, these are closely related theories (Cooper & Denner, 1998). Choices of theories frame key concepts and empirical approaches to understanding diversity, contexts, and pathways that in turn advance the development and refinement of theories. Among these theoretical lenses, drawn from economics, sociology, history, education, anthropology, and social and developmental psychology, are the following:

- Social capital theories of the interplay between social structures and personal agency (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988).
- Theories of individualism–collectivism (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1996) and family obligation (Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Van-Oss Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987).

- Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).
- Theories of socialization, including social learning (Bandura, 1986) and family management (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1999).
- Theories of motivation, including self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), engagement and alienation (Ogbu & Simmons, 1998), expectancy-value (Eccles, 1993), and stratification (García Coll & Magnuson, 1998).
- Theories of interactional contexts as settings for negotiating identities and power (Goffman, 1964).
- Theories of social identity (Tajfel, 1978) and ethnic identity (Rumbaut, 2000).
- Sociocultural and ecocultural theories of cultural practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chavez, & Angelillo, 2003; Weisner, 2002).
- Multiple worlds theories (Cooper, 2003; Phelan, Davidson, & Yu, 1998).

As summarized in Table E.1, this map offers readers ways to compare studies and compile their results into a converging story by tracing both similarities, and, at times, differences. For example, authors using many of these theories see contexts in terms of ongoing interactions between individuals—including children—and their families, schools, and communities. Differences can be seen in what features of children’s families, schools, and community contexts the authors chose to study, and how they define diversity in terms of location, immigration histories, social class, ethnicity, and gender, as well as other features. Finally, many authors trace children’s developmental pathways in terms of school achievement as well as other dimensions, with particular studies focusing on different phases of the years from early childhood through adolescence.

Weiss and her colleagues (chapter 1, this volume) draw on Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory and social capital theory (Coleman, 1988) to trace how parents’ and teachers’ involvement can link resources between low-income families and schools to children’s own influences on their pathways through school. The contexts of interest include families, schools, and classrooms. Families vary in expertise in school culture, their educational involvement through home literacy and math practices, and how they structure their children’s relations with teachers through contacts with school. Schools vary in how they provide children and families access to school culture and success; they can enhance children’s contexts through teachers’ investment and school outreach. In considering issues of diversity, the authors mapped variation by parents’ educational level among low-income European American, African American, and Latino families from California, Vermont, and Pennsylvania in relation to their children’s pathways through the primary grades. In defining pathways, the au-

TABLE E.1

Chapter Authors	Core Theories	Contexts	Diversity	Age Span and Pathways
Weiss, Dearing, Mayer, Kreider, and McCarthy	Ecological systems, social capital	Families, schools, classrooms	L: California, Vermont, Pennsylvania S: Low income E: African American, European American, Latino	Ages 5 to 8 (Kindergarten–Grade 3); school achievement in reading and math
Fredricks, Simpkins, and Eccles	Expectancy value, social learning, ecological systems, family management	Families, sports, music	L: Michigan S: Working class and middle income E: Primarily European American Gender	Ages 7 to 10 (Grades 2, 3, and 5); skills, motivation, and participation in instrumental music and sports
Thorne	Sociocultural, social capital, interactional contexts	Families, peers, school lunchroom, playground, classrooms	L: California S: Low income I/E: Chinese, Vietnamese, African American, others Gender	Ages 10 to 13, elementary to middle school; peer networks
Lowe, Weisner, Geis, and Huston	Ecocultural	Families, welfare-to-work program, child care	L: Wisconsin S: Low income Gender	Ages 1 to 10 (elementary); stable or changing use of child care offered by program
Blumenfeld et al.	Ecocultural, engagement	Classrooms	L: Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin S: Low income E: African American, Latino Gender	Ages 8 to 10 (Grades 3–5); school engagement: affective, behavioral, cognitive

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TABLE E.1
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Chapter Authors	Core Theories	Contexts	Diversity	Age Span and Pathways
Stipek	Self-efficacy, ecological systems	Families, school tracks	L: California, Vermont, Pennsylvania S: Low income E: African American, European American, Latino	Ages 5 to 10 (Kindergarten-Grade 5); social competence, teacher-child relationships, attitudes towards school, perceived academic competence, academic achievement
García Coll, Szalacha, and Palacios	Ecological systems, engagement, stratification, social identity, ethnic identity, and immigrant adaptation	Immigrant communities, families, schools	L: Rhode Island I: Cambodian, Dominican, Portuguese, language comfort, meaning of immigration S: parent education, parent occupation	Ages 6 to 8 and 9 to 11 (Grades 1-3, 4-6); academic values and aspirations, school achievement, ethnic and social identities
Cooper, Domínguez, and Rosas	Ecocultural, bridging multiple worlds	Families, peers, schools, community college program	L: California S: Low income I/E: Latino, primarily Mexican immigrant	Ages 11 to 18 (Grades 6-12); school achievement, career aspirations, college knowledge, college enrollment
Fulgini, Alvarez, Bachman, and Rosas	Family obligation, social identity	Families	L: New York I/E: Chinese, Russian, Dominican, African American, European American	Ages 7 to 9 (Grades 2-4); academic motivation and anxiety, moral reasoning

Note. L = location; S = social class; I = immigration; E = ethnicity-race.

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thors considered trajectories as the developmental patterns in literacy and math of individual children and pathways as the patterns common to groups of children. Families' educational involvement at home and their contacts with school enhanced children's achievement pathways, so that children of less-educated but highly involved mothers looked like the pathways of children with more educated mothers.

Fredricks, Simpkins, and Eccles (chapter 2, this volume) draw on expectancy-value (Eccles, 1993), social learning (Bandura, 1986), ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and family management models (Furstenberg et al., 1999) to understand how parents guide sports and instrumental music activities for their children by conveying their values, modeling, and providing emotional and instrumental support. Thus, the contexts of families shape the contexts of children's skill development and their motivation in sports or music. Issues of diversity are examined in terms of variation by gender in a sample of middle-income, largely European American families living in Michigan, so diversity in family socialization practices is seen in how families socialize boys compared to girls. Pathways are traced in terms of children's development of skills and motivation for sports or music.

Thorne (chapter 3, this volume) draws on theories of social practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and the negotiation of identities and power in social contexts (Goffman, 1964) to examine how children's meanings of immigration, ethnicity, "race," and gender are negotiated through the activities and practices of an ethnically diverse group of children in their elementary school lunchroom in Oakland, California. Practice theories highlight both the structural forces that partially shape conditions in which children live as well as children's active, situated, and open-ended engagement in everyday life; together these shape trajectories of individual children's development. Thorne considers children's social and institutional contexts as dynamic and socially constructed, and the boundaries across these contexts as fluid and negotiated. In considering issues of diversity, Thorne challenges approaches that treat diversity in terms of separate and static social categories by reflecting on how children mark and define social "lines of difference" and inequalities through their activities and practices at school. Thorne also sees pathways as defined by social practices, so they too can change, as seen in children's shifting peer networks in their transition from elementary to middle school. She observes that social practices are used "to mark, mute, and negotiate social differences. When these practices involve labeling or group formation, they can matter for trajectories of personal change."

Stipek (chapter 5, this volume) draws on Bandura's theory of reciprocal determinism (1978) and the ecocultural focus on cultural practices (Weisner, 2002) to consider how family and school contexts are linked by the ongoing actions of families, teachers, and children. Family practices can be

seen in their discipline and school preparation before children enter kindergarten and in teachers' views of family practices. Caretakers' roles change in each context and with children's development. School contexts are defined by classroom practices, classroom quality, and teachers' responses to individual children. In both family and school contexts, children are active, reciprocal agents. Stipek considers diversity as a grouping variable for children's skills and dispositions (both academic and social) as well as their ethnicity and gender. She also maps diversity in terms of variations in family practices, children's entering skills, and school contexts. Pathways of children in classrooms reflect teachers' responses to children's characteristics. Children exert agency in affecting their pathways as an active part of a reciprocal system of people and contexts. There are positive and negative developmental pathways, and children can move from one to another. Staying on any pathway results from a combination of child skills and dispositions and school context rather than a preestablished direction, whether negative or positive. Like other authors, Stipek defines a *trajectory* as an individual child's academic development over time and a *pathway* as a common track many children travel and a mechanism keeping them on that pathway. Factors that create pathway continuity—such as poor school quality in primary grades—point to where change could benefit all children on that pathway.

Lowe and his colleagues (chapter 6, this volume) draw on the ecological framework (Weisner, 2002) to map what features of family contexts are linked to change or stability of their child care by examining these issues among families participating in the former welfare-to-work New Hope program in Wisconsin. Three contexts of interest were the family, reflected in their goals, values, and resources that in turn shape their activities and practices involving child care offered by the program. Families everywhere face a common adaptive project: to create a reasonably sustainable daily routine of family life in a particular sociohistorical period, neighborhood, and institutional context, with varying public supports. Daily routines or activities are familiar chains of events that make up people's days and weeks—having breakfast together, morning “getting up” routines, bringing children to school, watching TV, bedtime stories, visiting grandparents, doing homework, household tasks and chores, and religious activities. The authors see diversity across social groups as defined by variations in ongoing activities and practices of family life. These may often align with ethnicity, poverty, and neighborhoods, but none of these alone is the basis of diversity, with mapping similarities and differences an empirical question. The authors define pathways as “activities in children's daily routines (that) provide stepping stones along the paths of children's development.” Variation in activities available to children in different families and communities over time helps account for differences in child and family developmental

trajectories, whereas developmental pathways are shared and organized at the community level.

Blumenfeld and her colleagues (this volume) draw on theories of engagement and alienation (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) and motivation (Fredricks & Eccles, 2002). These authors defined context from the perspectives of children: because they perceive their classroom experiences differently from others in the same class, the school context for each child reflects interactions between student characteristics (such as their perceptions of their classrooms and teachers) and classroom characteristics that might affect all children in a class the same way. This study reflected issues of diversity in two ways: first, by illuminating variation among the experiences of African American and Latino children from low-income families living in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan. In addition, this volume focuses on variation among students' perceptions of their classroom experiences. Thus, the pathways of students in different engagement typologies were made up of those students who reacted differently to school. These engagement pathways were behavioral, reflecting involvement in school activities; emotional, reflecting reactions to school; and cognitive, reflecting investment in school.

García Coll and her colleagues (chapter 10, this volume) draw on theories of ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), stratification (García Coll et al., 1996), engagement and alienation (Ogbu & Simons, 1998), social identity (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Tajfel, 1978), ethnic identity and immigrant assimilation (Rumbaut, 2000), and ecocultural practices (Cooper et al., 1994; Weisner, 2002), to examine ethnic identity and school adaptation of children of immigrants in Providence, Rhode Island. The contexts of interest include the sending and receiving communities of immigrants from Cambodia, the Dominican Republic, and Portugal, as well as children's families and schools in Providence, including their teachers and peers. Particularly relevant were daily practices of schools, which could be inhibiting when schools categorized children by race and immigration and limited access to resources or promoting when cultural and family socialization practices of family obligation, for example, pushed Cambodian boys toward positive school outcomes. The authors traced issues of diversity by variation in immigrant parents' home-country education and cultural beliefs about school, reasons for immigration, language comfort, resources, and community support. Children's developmental pathways were mapped in terms of their achievement values for school, school achievement, and their identities involving culture, ethnicity, gender, immigration, race, and religion.

Cooper and her colleagues (chapter 11, this volume) draw on ecocultural (Weisner, 2002) and multiple worlds theories (Cooper et al., 2002; Phelan et al., 1998) to trace under what conditions children of low-income Mexican immigrant families build pathways from childhood to college. In particular,

how might participation in college outreach programs support children's links to peers and families and help them build pathways through school to college? These authors consider contexts in terms of children's "worlds" of families, peers, schools, and community programs. Children of immigrants face challenges and build resources for navigating pathways across these socially and culturally diverse contexts, which can have similar or different social and cultural requirements. The authors consider diversity at the community level in terms of equity in access to education for each cohort of children moving through school in terms of their immigration and national origin, ethnicity, social class, and gender. The authors trace children's pathways from childhood to college in terms of their math and English school achievement, college and career aspirations and knowledge, and college enrollment.

Fulgini and his colleagues (chapter 12, this volume) draw on theories of family obligation (Sabogal et al., 1987), social identity (Ruble et al., in press), and moral reasoning (Turiel, 1998), to consider how children of immigrants compare to those from U.S.-born families in their reasoning about family obligation, social identities, and schoolwork. This study focused on contexts by asking how children's perceptions of their family obligations were resources rather than drains on their motivation. With regard to diversity, Fulgini and his colleagues compare five groups defined by ethnicity, immigration, and race. These included children from Chinese families representing the largest Asian group in New York City, Dominicans as the largest Hispanic group, and Russian (former Soviet Union) families as the largest European immigrant group in New York City, compared to children from African American and European American families. The authors trace pathways through childhood in terms of children's academic motivation and anxieties and their moral reasoning across the elementary school years.

Taken together, these chapters chart the progress of this research network in addressing how contexts and diversity can be resources in developmental pathways through middle childhood, and how the interdisciplinary dialogues have been productive for theory, practice, and policy.

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