

Place-Based Developmental Research: Conceptual and Methodological Advances in Studying Youth Development in Context

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Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development
Ginger A. Moore, Editor

VOL. 88 | NO. 3 | 2023 | SERIAL NO. 347

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Society for Research in Child Development

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Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development

Vol. 88, No. 3, 2023, Serial No. 347

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Society for Research in Child Development

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Abstract Scientists have, for some time, recognized that development unfolds in numerous settings, including families, schools, neighborhoods, and organized and unorganized activity settings. Since the turn of the 20th century, the body of mainstream neighborhood effects scholarship draws heavily from the early 20th century Chicago School of Sociology frameworks and have been situating development in neighborhood contexts and working to identify the structures and processes via which neighborhoods matter for a range of developmental outcomes, especially achievement, behavioral and emotional problems, and sexual activity. From this body of work, two new areas of developmental scholarship are emerging. Both areas are promising for advancing an understanding of child development in context. First, cultural-developmental neighborhood researchers are advancing neighborhood effects research that explicitly recognizes the ways that racial, ethnic, cultural, and immigrant social positions matter for neighborhood environments and for youths' developmental demands, affordances, experiences, and competencies. This body of work substantially expands the range of developmental outcomes examined in neighborhood effects scholarship to

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Citation Information: Witherspoon, D. P., White, R. M. B., Bámaca M. Y., Browning, C. R., Leech, T. G. J., Leventhal, T., Matthews, S. A., Pinchak, N., Roy, A. L., Sugie, N., & Winkler, E. N. (2023). Place-based developmental research: conceptual and methodological advances in studying youth development in context. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 88(3).

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<https://doi.org/10.1111/mono.12472>

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recognize normative physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, social, and cultural competencies that have largely been overlooked in neighborhood effects scholarship that espoused a more color-blind developmental approach. Second, activity space neighborhood researchers are recognizing that residential neighborhoods have important implications for broader activity spaces—or the set of locations and settings to which youth are regularly exposed, including, for example, schools, work, organized activities, and hang-outs. They are using newer technologies and geographic frameworks to assess exposure to residential neighborhood and extra-neighborhood environments. These perspectives recognize that time (i.e., from microtime to mesotime) and place are critically bound and that exposures can be operationalized at numerous levels of the ecological system (i.e., from microsystems to macrosystems). These frameworks address important limitations of prior development in context scholarship by addressing selection and exposure. Addressing selection involves recognizing that families have some degree of choice when selecting into settings and variables that predict families' choices (e.g., income) also predict development. Considering exposure involves recognizing that different participants or residents experience different amounts of shared and nonshared exposures, resulting in both under- and over-estimation of contextual effects. Activity space scholars incorporate exposure to the residential neighborhood environments, but also to other locations and settings to which youth are regularly exposed, like schools, after-school settings, work, and hang-outs. Unfortunately, the cultural-development and activity space streams, which have both emerged from early 20th century work on neighborhood effects on development, have been advancing largely independently. Thus, the overarching aim of this monograph is to integrate scholarship on residential neighborhoods, **cultural development**, and activity spaces to advance a framework that can support a better understanding of development in context for diverse groups. In Chapters I and II we present the historical context of the three streams of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological research. We also advance a comprehensive cultural-developmental activity space framework for studying development in context among children, youth, and families that are ethnically, racially, and culturally heterogeneous. This framework actively recognized diversity in ethnic, racial, immigrant, and socioeconomic social positions. In Chapters III–V we advance specific features of the framework, focusing on: (1) the different levels of nested and nonnested ecological systems that can be captured and operationalized with activity space methods, (2) the different dimensions of time and exposures or experiences that can be captured and operationalized by activity space methods, and (3) the importance of settings structures and social processes for identifying underlying mechanisms of contextual effects on development. Structures are setting features related to the composition and spatial arrangement of people and institutions (e.g., socioeconomic disadvantage,

ethnic/racial compositions). Social processes represent the collective social dynamics that take place in settings, like social interactions, group activities, experiences with local institutions, mechanisms of social control, or shared beliefs. In Chapter VI, we highlight a range of methodological and empirical exemplars from the United States that are informed by our comprehensive cultural-developmental activity space framework. These exemplars feature both quantitative and qualitative methods, including method mixing. These exemplars feature both quantitative and qualitative methods, including method mixing. The exemplars also highlight the application of the framework across four different samples from populations that vary in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status (SES), geographic region, and urbanicity. They capture activity space characteristics and features in a variety of ways, in addition to incorporating family shared and non-shared activity space exposures. Finally, in Chapter VII we summarize the contributions of the framework for advancing a more comprehensive science of development in context, one that better realizes major developmental theories emphasizing persons, processes, contexts, and time. Additionally, we offer a place-based, culturally informed developmental research agenda to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population.

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Postmaster: Send all address changes to MONOGRAPHS OF THE SOCIETY FOR RESEARCH IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT, Wiley Periodicals LLC, C/O The Sheridan Press, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331.

THE MONOGRAPHS OF THE SOCIETY FOR RESEARCH IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT, (ISSN 0037-976X (print), ISSN 1540-5834 (online)) is published quarterly, on behalf of The Society for Research in Child Development, Inc., by Wiley Periodicals LLC, 111 River St., Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774.

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Printed in the USA by The Sheridan Group

ISSN 0037-976X (Print)

ISSN 1540-5834 (Online)

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Development unfolds in numerous contexts. *Neighborhood effects* research has long examined development within neighborhoods contexts, but two recent perspectives have emerged from neighborhood effects research that, combined, are theoretically and empirically generative for understanding development in context. Cultural-developmental researchers are advancing neighborhood effects scholarship that recognizes the ways that racial, ethnic, cultural, and immigrant social positions matter for neighborhoods and for youths' development. Activity space researchers recognize that residential neighborhoods have important implications for broader activity spaces – the set of locations and settings to which youth are regularly exposed – and are using newer technologies and geographic frameworks to assess exposure to residential neighborhood and extra-neighborhood environments. Unfortunately, the two perspectives have been advancing largely independently. Thus, this monograph's aim is to integrate scholarship on residential neighborhoods, cultural development, and activity spaces to advance a framework that can support a better understanding of development in context for diverse groups.