COMMUNITY PROCESSES SUPPORTING CHILDREN’S DEVELOPMENT AND MOBILITY
SHAPING ECONOMIC FUTURES: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITIES

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Forces Affecting Children’s Development

- Bioecological theory of development
  - Individuals select into and affect contexts
  - Contexts affect individuals through proximal processes, opportunities, and constraints
  - For children, families, communities, and schools are key contexts
Historic Shifts in Families, Neighborhoods, and Schools

- Heightened income inequality across families

**Distribution of Family Income, 1963–2013**


*Notes:* 2013 dollars. Income here is measured as private income (e.g., earnings and dividends) plus cash government benefits. Income differences narrow when all taxes and transfers—such as health insurance and in-kind government benefits—are included, but private wealth does not change.
Historic Shifts in Families, Neighborhoods, and Schools

- Heightened income inequality across families
- Growing economic segregation in neighborhoods and schools
Historic Shifts in Families, Neighborhoods, and Schools

- Heightened income inequality across families
- Growing economic segregation in neighborhoods and schools
- How do these economic trends affect proximal processes driving development?
- At what points of development are community contexts and processes most influential?
Intergenerational Transmission of Inequality

**Investment/resource perspective:**
Advantaged families provide more stimulation and support; access better schools and community resources

**Stress perspective:**
Disadvantaged families experience more chaotic, unstable, unsafe family and community environments

**Norms perspective:**
Advantage supports cultural capital and social norms of achievement & support
Concentrated Disadvantage in Preschools Linked to Lower School Readiness

Data from NCEDL, $N = 837$ followed from preschool entry through kindergarten
Community and Parenting Processes
Promoting Children’s Achievement

Data from ECLS-K kindergarten through 2nd grade, age 5 to 8, N = 12,256
Neighborhood pollution, crime; school characteristics; parental distress ns
Community and School Processes Promoting Educational Attainment

Data from Add Health, ages 15 to 29, $N = 18,396$

Neighborhood norms and school stress ns
Community and School Processes Promoting Early Career Success

Data from Add Health, ages 15 to 29, $N = 18,396$
Neighborhood norms, stress; school stress ns
Summary Points

- Concentrated advantage/disadvantage at community level—associated with resources, stressors, norms--helps drive intergenerational transmission of inequality
- Signs apparent in early childhood; expand over time through transition to adulthood
- Parenting and teaching practices essential in earlier years
- School contexts are key for teens
Implications for Policy and Practice

- Place-based initiatives investing in
  - community and school resource enhancement
  - crime reduction
  - parenting support

- Mobility and structural initiatives to increase
  - access to high resource communities
  - access to high resource, goal-oriented schools

- BUT: Residential and school mobility also inhibits successful child development
  - Attend to retention, stability