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Introduction: Preparing Educators in Family Involvement

Inés didn't know what to do. Her daughter Nina sat under the kitchen table crying, refusing to continue with her homework. Inés was exasperated. Nina had been working on her homework assignment for the past three hours and was beside herself. "I don't like it, I don't know what to do," she cried.

In the beginning of the year, Nina had been placed in a bilingual first-grade classroom. Inés went to the school and talked with the principal to request an all-English setting. Inés felt it was good for her daughter to be in an all-English classroom so that Nina could avoid the struggle with English that her mother faced. She felt that for her daughter to become a professional in America, she had to be fluent in English. Inés herself enrolled in English classes at the community high school and, at the advice of her close friends from church, only spoke to her daughter in English. Inés was grateful that the principal permitted the switch but then faced the problem of not being able to help her daughter with homework.

At the parent-teacher conference in the beginning of the year, Inés was afraid to tell the teacher, Ms. Chesin, about her difficulties helping Nina with homework and understanding what was sent home. Nina translated throughout most of the meeting. When Inés asked the teacher for more direction on how to help, Ms. Chesin encouraged Inés to read with her daughter in Spanish at home.

With the spring parent-teacher conference coming up in the next few weeks, Inés was prepared to ask again for help with the homework, but she also anticipated Ms. Chesin recommending a bilingual placement. She wondered if she had made the wrong decision by choosing a monolingual classroom for her daughter. Would Nina be better served in a bilingual classroom? How could Inés know?
The case of Inés points to some of the many facets of family involvement in education, including homework help, advocating for one's child, and navigating the choices of the school system. By family involvement, we mean the activities that families engage in to support their children's learning, whether at home, at school, or in the community. As the story of Inés illustrates, family involvement has multiple dimensions, including parental aspirations, parenting behaviors, and school relationships. Inés had high hopes for her daughter’s success through going to school and learning English. She offered herself as a model for her daughter by taking English classes. She advocated her daughter’s classroom placement with the principal and participated in parent-teacher conferences. Yet she questioned the outcome of her involvement and struggled to help with her child’s homework. Like Inés, many parents want to be involved in their children’s learning, but find it challenging because they lack information on which to base their decisions, confidence to approach teachers, and practical skills to help their children.

Many teachers want to help parents, too, but lack the skills and school supports that facilitate meaningful conversations with parents. Today’s teachers meet increasingly diverse students and families, with different languages and ways of thinking about learning; they find parents who work and have little time to come to school; and those serving poor communities encounter families who are overwhelmed with the strains of poverty and the lack of supports in their neighborhoods. Teachers, however, who actively contact the families of low-achieving students do make a difference in improving their performance over time (Westat & Policy Study Associates, 2001). Through outreach, families can provide their children with the home supports that align with school expectations. By understanding families, teachers can align their instruction with the knowledge and resources that families possess or what is referred to as family “funds of knowledge.” To prepare for home-school relationships, including solving the complicated issues such as those in Inés’ case, educators can benefit from preservice training and continuing professional development in family involvement.

Teachers need new skills to develop strong partnerships with families. Their repertoire of skills should include being able to do the following:

- Relate to parents—and families—in ways that build trust and encourage participation
- Communicate with parents the new standards that are affecting all schools and all children
- Learn about parent involvement from parents’ perspective and not solely from the school’s official policies
- Communicate with and engage families who come from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds than their own
We created this casebook as a teaching tool to encourage the integration of family involvement in the preparation of teachers and school administrators. A vast literature on family involvement confirms that when families are involved in children’s learning, no matter what their income or background, they have a positive influence on student social and academic outcomes (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Despite the importance of family–school partnerships, teacher education programs frequently do not cover family involvement in their curriculum (Epstein, Sanders, & Clark, 1999; Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997). New teachers, in particular, feel that they lack adequate preparation in working with families (Public Education Network, 2003).

In developing this casebook for educators, we focused on connecting theory and research to practice in family involvement. We adopted Ecological Systems Theory as an overarching framework for thinking about the multiple contexts of children’s lives and for considering how families, schools, and communities can best support child development. Within this framework, seven theoretical perspectives serve as “lenses” through which to analyze family involvement practice. We also chose to use cases to capture the complexity of the relationships of families, schools, and communities and paid particular attention to developing cases that focus on dilemmas of practice—difficult and ambiguous situations in which educators and parents must negotiate their differences. The cases reflect the lives of children in the elementary school years and their families.

ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

Ecological Systems Theory highlights the importance of context in children’s development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986a; Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982). Context is understood in terms of various systems that influence the child’s development either directly (e.g., through daily routines and interactions that occur in the child’s immediate context) or indirectly (i.e., through more distal factors that impact those routines and interactions). A primary tenet of Ecological Systems Theory is that every level of the ecological system is interconnected and thus can influence all other subsystems. These influences are reciprocal rather than unidirectional. Thus, routines and interactions in the child’s classroom affect what happens in the child’s home and vice versa. Ecological Systems Theory has the capacity to explain how issues such as social and economic policies (considered distant from a child’s everyday experience) affect what happens in the child’s immediate contexts. It is a theory that is powerful precisely because it portrays the complexity of these multiple levels and helps explain the mechanisms through which children and their families are influenced.
Ecological Systems Theory is represented visually as a set of concentric circles surrounding the child (See Figure FM.1). Immediate contexts in which the child interacts comprise the microsystem. Adults that nurture and teach children, peers and siblings who play and socialize with them, and settings such as day care, home, and school constitute the microsystem. The mesosystem is the next level of Ecological Systems Theory and involves interactions and relationships between and among individuals and settings that comprise the microsystem. For example, mesosystem interactions include those between parents and teachers (individuals) and among microsystem settings (e.g., child care centers, afterschool programs, and/or schools). In this way, the mesosystem represents the degree of connection, coordination, and continuity across a child's microsystems.

Figure FM.1  Ecological Systems Theory

The exosystem of the Ecological Systems Theory is comprised of the contexts that influence the child indirectly. Thus, the exosystem exerts its influence on the child via its impact on individuals and institutions in the child’s microsystem. For example, parents’ workplaces may institute new work schedules that interfere with parents’ ability to read to their children each night, which then affects the children’s literacy achievement. The macrosystem operates at the broadest level of influence and is comprised of political systems, social policy, culture, economic trends, and so forth. Macrosystems determine to a great extent the resources, opportunities, and constraints present in the lives of children and families. For example, welfare reform (initiated at the national level) has exerted control over parents’ access to economic support and has changed the conditions under which parents receive that support and the ways that they provide and care for their children. Cultural practices and belief systems affect what parents and teachers prioritize and value and how they organize their daily routines to achieve their goals.

The chronosystem represents the element of time, both in the individual’s life trajectory (e.g., infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, etc.) and historical context (see also Bronfenbrenner, 1986b). This volume focuses on the developmental period of middle childhood, and at a time in which economic factors and technological developments profoundly shape the contexts and settings in which children live. For example, economic and cultural changes in society over the past 50 years have led to a dramatic increase in dual-income families, which in turn has affected children’s daily routines and experiences through nonparental care. Furthermore, the rise of computer use and other visual media have had a profound impact on how children spend leisure time, learn cultural norms and values, and gather information. It is easy to lose sight of how important these changes have been to children’s daily life experiences and to fail to consider how they influence their development.

**THE CASES: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT DILEMMAS**

We created this casebook to address some of the difficulties that schools face in establishing communication and meaningful relationships with low-income families whose racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds differ from those of school staff. The cases present situations requiring problem solving that sharpen teachers’ critical thinking skills and also expose them to perspectives of parents, students, and other family members that they may not learn about through a teacher’s daily routine. According to Dennis Shirley, professor at Boston College, teachers must know how to “think critically quickly, creatively, and responsively” (Harvard Family Research Project, 2003). Such skills are best learned through reflection and problem solving in the classroom and in field settings. This volume supports skill development by offering...
teachers, through the use of cases for discussion-based learning, a broad understanding of the constraints on and opportunities for engaging families in children’s education. Supplementing this book, we at the Harvard Family Research Project also host the Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE; www.finenetwork.org), an online resource that provides up-to-date research, bibliographies, and additional teaching cases on family involvement in education.

The 12 cases in this book focus on contemporary educational issues that defy easy answers but instead encourage creative inquiry and reflection. They illustrate dilemmas of practice that occur when teachers, principals, and other school personnel construct (or fail to construct) relationships with families. Parents and teachers find themselves in ambiguous situations in which they must make choices among alternative courses of action. Their situations invite users of this casebook to discuss these alternatives and propose resolutions. Specifically, the dilemmas in this casebook center on key issues in family involvement, such as how families and schools construct their roles in children’s learning, how economic and time poverty interfere with involvement wishes, and cultural differences that arise between families and schools.

Despite a common desire to see children make strides in their learning, parents and teachers often hold different viewpoints about the roles of families and schools. They experience what Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1978, p. 26) has described as the ambiguities that grow out of “overlapping worlds with fuzzy boundaries.” Some of the contested areas of family and school control that are highlighted in this casebook include defining academic progress, advocating student safety, and negotiating afterschool time for children. We hope that a careful examination of these situations leads readers to focus on the right questions, those that go beyond the blaming of either parents or teachers for the failure of involvement and instead emphasize the relationship between meaningful involvement opportunities afforded by schools and parental agency.

The dilemmas in this casebook reflect, in particular, what happens in schools and communities that are resource poor, where teachers often do not reflect the communities they serve and where low-income parents struggle with making a living and meeting school expectations of involvement at home and in school. Several cases focus on what Chin and Newman (2002) have described as “time poverty,” referring to the competing demands on the time of working poor families to earn a living (often by putting in long work hours and taking irregular shifts), and to support and monitor their children’s learning. These cases invite analysis that moves from the microcosm of interpersonal relations to the macrocosm of social issues that impact children’s learning.

Race, culture, and class divisions provide the context for most of the cases in this volume and present another dimension to dilemmas of practice.
Teachers' and school administrators' perceptions of parents' socioeconomic backgrounds influence how they interact with parents, and whether or not they support or reject parent strategies of involvement (Bloom, 2001; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). All too often, school personnel treat poor parents from a deficit perspective, which becomes a barrier to family involvement. The larger school climate, however, influences the home-school relationship. When schools nurture a strong sense of community where respectful relationships exist among teachers, school leaders, and parents, class and cultural differences do not necessarily become barriers to meaningful family involvement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Lewis & Forman, 2002). By presenting real world situations, the cases in this book invite readers to examine the multiple perspectives of actors in their specific class, culture, and institutional contexts.

About Family Involvement in Education

Family involvement in education refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and activities of parents and other family members to support children's learning. Although such involvement usually focuses on parents, it also includes grandparents, siblings, and extended family members who have significant responsibility in a child's upbringing. Family involvement covers a broad range of constructs, including parental aspirations and expectations, parenting behaviors, and participation in school activities. Some consistent findings about family involvement processes suggest their significance for children's learning and development.

- Parent values and expectations are associated with children's motivation to learn as well as their academic achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Scott-Jones, 1995). Beneficial values can take the form of high but realistic educational aspirations and expectations, a focus on effort rather than ability, and the value placed on specific subject matter.

- Parent behaviors around learning activities such as reading, conversations about school-related matters, and visiting the public library are correlated with improvements in children's reading comprehension (Anderson, 2000; Lee & Croninger, 1994).

- Parent participation in school—in the form of attending conferences and class events and volunteering—also supports student achievement. Such involvement is associated with students' earning high grades, enjoying school, avoiding grade repetition, suspension and expulsion, and participating in extracurricular activities (Nord, Brimhall, & West, 1997).

- Parent leadership in decision-making bodies and through community organizing brings about school policy changes and delivers new resources to underresourced schools (Shirley, 1997). These changes create the school conditions that enhance student achievement (Gold, Simon, & Brown, 2002).
Far from being straightforward, the relationship between family involvement and student achievement is complex and varies with a host of factors such as the type and circumstances of involvement. For example, one large survey of children from kindergarten through third grade found that family involvement in the home strongly predicted children’s achievement in math and reading, and that the quality of parent-teacher interactions was positively related to children’s socioemotional adjustment (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999). The frequency of parent-teacher contacts, however, did not have the same beneficial outcomes for children and could indicate that a parent is responding to a child who is not doing well in school. The research nonetheless points to the importance of the home environment and suggests that schools can improve their efforts to communicate with parents about their children’s academic progress and to promote constructive parent-teacher relations.

Family involvement must be understood as dynamic: Differences in how and when family involvement matters for children’s school success develop over time. Some longitudinal research studies suggest that earlier involvement leads to stronger effects than later involvement. In a study of low-performing Title I students in elementary and middle grades, higher parent involvement increased student achievement in both reading and math, but younger children made the most improvement (Shaver & Walls, 1998). A study of an early intervention program in the Chicago public schools also reported that parents’ school involvement while their children attended preschool and kindergarten had benefits for children at age 14, including higher reading achievement, lower rates of grade retention, and fewer years in special education (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999). Through their participation in the early intervention program, parents may have developed the commitment to remain involved in their children’s education and to monitor their school progress over time. However, family involvement tends to decline as children move through the upper grades. This is unfortunate because family involvement continues to have a positive effect on student achievement in middle and high school (Keith & Keith, 1993; Patrikakou, 2004). The benefits of early and continuous family involvement carry implications for schools and communities to strengthen their approaches to promote family involvement from prekindergarten to twelfth grade.

A CHILD DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

Family involvement is important to understand in terms of child development. This casebook focuses on family involvement in the educational experiences of elementary school children (roughly ages 6 to 12 years). Originally thought of as a period of relative stagnation during which children simply refine all the skills they acquired in early childhood and prepare for adolescence (Eccles, 1999), researchers can now identify changes in cognition, social relationships, and identity commonly associated with the elementary school
years or middle childhood (Sameroff & Haith, 1996), many of which have relevance for family-school relationships.

During the elementary years, children use more sophisticated strategies in their reasoning about their world and develop reading and math skills, self-awareness, self-reflection and evaluation, and perspective-taking (Canobi, Reeve, & Pattison, 2003; Harter, 1988, 1999; Morris, Bloodgood, Lomax, & Perney, 2003).

Children enter formal schooling at about this time in many cultures and start to spend a significant portion of their lives away from their families and outside of their homes (Eccles, 1999; Erikson, 1968). They experience new interactions with significant adults such as teachers and other school personnel and with a wide range of peers and diverse types of families. They take on new social roles and are exposed to feedback from new people about their competencies in various activities. Often, they are presented with frequent opportunities for self-comparison with their peers. The extent to which these comparisons are consistently favorable or unfavorable may begin to shape children's sense of competency and esteem (Pomerantz, Ruble, Frey, & Greulich, 1995).

With entry into formal schooling, children must grapple with increasing demands that they maintain control over their behavior (e.g., adhere to rules, be well-behaved; Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; Goldsmith, Aksan, Essex, Smider, & Vandell, 2001). At the same time, they are beginning to be afforded more freedom and autonomy from their parents and other adults. To meet adults' expectations while exercising more choice, children must learn to monitor their own behavior, judge adults' perceptions of them and of others and make adjustments based on both of these sources of information. These developmental tasks extend to children's roles in family-school relationships. One study noted that elementary school children often take an active role in shaping when and how their parents are involved in their schooling, driven in part by their growing desire for autonomy (Edwards & Alldred, 2000).

During this time, children begin to formulate notions about who they are, what they are good or not good at, and what they are capable or incapable of. This information will come from many sources other than their families, such as teachers and other adults in the schools, coaches, other parents, friends, and peers (Eccles, 1999). Children are faced then with the task of making sense of this information, integrating it with past knowledge of the self, and speculating about prospects for the future. In this critical period of cognitive and behavioral development, identity formation, social comparisons, and the integration of knowledge from multiple sources, it is critical that families and schools work together to optimize children's positive experiences in their early schooling.

APPROACHES TO FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

No one best approach represents how families and schools can work together. Several educators have proposed frameworks and strategies that
schools and communities can apply and adapt to their localities. Following are some of the more commonly used frameworks that guide school and community practice.

1. A family-school partnership

Joyce Epstein contends that students achieve greater success if families, schools, and communities operate as overlapping spheres of influence in a child's life, interacting frequently and sharing common goals (Epstein, 1995). By emphasizing their overlap, Epstein provides schools with a vision of what they can strive to be: family-like schools. These schools recognize each child's individuality and treat each child as special. Likewise, school-like families recognize children as students and reinforce the importance of school, homework, and other activities that build on student success.

Epstein specifies six types of family and community involvement in education that schools can support. Type 1, parenting, encourages families to create home environments that support success in school. Type 2, communicating, helps families and schools share information. Type 3, volunteering, brings parents into school buildings. Type 4, learning at home, supports parents as they assist their children with schoolwork. Type 5, decision making, invites parents to participate in schools' policy development. Type 6, community collaboration, seeks to integrate community resources into school programs to enrich student learning and provide nonacademic support.

According to Epstein, children are likely to achieve both academic and nonacademic success when a partnership of support exists between families, schools, and communities. The six types of family involvement promote students' improved organizational abilities, motivation, communication skills, classroom performance, respect for parents, and awareness of the future.

2. A comprehensive school improvement model

James Comer's program begins with the premise that children's healthy development is a crucial factor in their learning (Comer, Haynes, & Joyner, 1996). Children learn well when adults in their lives create a healthy climate for their development. Conditions in many poor, urban schools, though, are not conducive to healthy child development and learning. In these schools, personnel do not fully understand the development of disadvantaged children and develop low expectations of them.

Based on Comer's research, the school development program restructures schools so that adults in a child's life—parents, school personnel, community members—interact positively and create a caring and predictable environment
conducive to child development and learning. A school planning and management team, a parent team, and a student and staff support team provide mechanisms through which to promote these interactions.

Parent involvement is considered to be the cornerstone of the program. Parents bridge the gap between home and school and bring an understanding of the social development needs and strengths of children to the daily activities and decision-making process in schools. (Haynes et al., 1996).

The school development program creates the following three mechanisms for social interactions that support child development and learning:

1. The school planning and management team, consisting of the principal and representative teachers, parents, and other school staff, develops and monitors a comprehensive school plan for the academic, school climate, and staff development goals of the school.

2. The parent team involves parents at three different levels of participation. At the first level, the majority of parents support the school by attending parent-teacher conferences, reinforcing learning at home, and participating in social activities. At the second level, some parents serve in the school as volunteers and paid aides to support learning activities. At the third level, parents who are selected by other parents serve on a school planning and management team.

3. The student and staff support team, consisting of the school psychologist, guidance counselor, school nurse, and other staff with child development and mental health experience, consults with teachers and the school planning and management team on child development and behavior issues.

Because parents are crucial to the success of the program, schools need to improve their outreach and involvement strategies. Successful schools build trust, plan well, empower parents, and monitor activities continuously to improve responsiveness to parents (Haynes et al., 1996).

3. Funds of knowledge

"Funds of knowledge," initially conceptualized by Luis Moll and his colleagues, refers to the knowledge and skills that households have accumulated over time to ensure household functioning and well-being (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). A household's cultural and cognitive resources have great potential for classroom instruction, a viewpoint often missing in school relationships with immigrant and working-class households. For example, by learning about the occupations and daily routines of households, a teacher or network of teachers can develop classroom projects connected to the lives of children and their families. Children participate as active learners as they use their social contacts outside the classroom to gain new knowledge. Parents also participate in the classroom as experts who share intimate knowledge about a topic.
The funds of knowledge approach proposes that to increase the effectiveness of schools, the resources, experiences, and knowledge residing in the family and community must be placed in the foreground of children's school and educational experiences. It reframes family-school relationships to make communication, interactions, and curriculum development a two-way process. Teachers learn from parents and family networks and vice versa. Through dialogue, parents and teachers serve as resources for one another as they come to understand problems and solutions from multiple points of view (Civil & Quintos, 2002).

The funds of knowledge approach rejects one-way attempts to replicate and transmit school values and activities to the home, regardless of the cultural relevance these values and activities have for the families and communities they try to influence. It is particularly relevant for transforming practices in schools that serve minority, immigrant, and poor children, whose school performance lags behind white, middle-class students. The approach suggests that disadvantaged children can succeed in school if classrooms are reorganized to give them the same advantage that middle-class children always seemed to have had—instruction that puts their knowledge and experiences at the heart of learning (Roseberry, McIntyre, & Gonzalez, 2001).

4. Empowerment approaches

Empowerment approaches have evolved from family involvement research and practice among low-income communities. Schools often display deficit-oriented and stereotypical attitudes toward low-income families. When families feel disrespected and intimidated, they choose to distance themselves from schools. Empowerment approaches address this problem by instilling parents with the confidence to advocate for better schools and better outcomes for children.

One type of empowerment approach focuses on the individual and works to impart to parents new knowledge, skills, and opportunities to effect change in communicating and relating to school personnel. For example, the Boston-based Right Question Project provides a simple methodology of framing questions that parents can use in teacher conferences and parent meetings (Coffman, 2000). Parents can also be supported in developing leadership skills to monitor school reform. For example, the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership trains parents to understand Kentucky's education standards and to initiate school projects that enrich students' learning and promote family involvement (Hernandez, 2000).

A second approach to empowerment focuses on the collective action of parents. It is in and through communities that low- to moderate-income and ethnically diverse families can create the public space to address school concerns. Through one-on-one conversations, group dialogue, and reflection,
parents and other residents develop a strong sense of community and learn how to use their collective power to advocate for school change (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Gold et al., 2002; Shirley, 1997; Warren, 2002). All too often schools individualize systemic problems. For example, a student might be faulted for poor performance, when in reality the problem also lies in the lack of qualified teachers and instructional materials. Community organizing counters this individualizing trend by bringing people into relationships with one another so that they can identify and act on systemic problems—overcrowding, deteriorating school facilities, lack of teacher quality, poor school performance, and inadequate funding.

EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Family involvement is important in relation to the educational issues of our time—the achievement gap and the focus on performance standards and accountability. The achievement gap between more- and less-advantaged students is perhaps the most pressing educational issue for a democratic society. School reform efforts that focus only on school practices have not made a significant dent in closing the achievement gap. High quality academic instruction in conjunction with the values and preparation afforded by the home, and the community learning opportunities that reinforce the work of schools—that is, a child's social ecology—make up the context in which to impact educational inequality. In *The Black-White Test Score Gap*, Phillips and colleagues reported that traditional measures of education and economic inequality did not explain much of the gap among five- and six-year-old children (Phillips, Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, & Crane, 1998). Parenting practices, however, had a sizeable effect on children's test scores. Additionally, the key predictors of the achievement gap include the home learning environment, the home-school connection, and the community (Barton, 2003). The interface among home, school, and community as contexts of learning are apparent in the cases in this volume, such as “Staying on the Path Toward College” (Case 7), “Afterschool for Cindy” (Case 8), “Piecing It Together” (Case 9), “What Words Don’t Say” (Case 10), “Raising Children Alone” (Case 11), and “Learning in the Shadow of Violence” (Case 12).

We are also in a time in which education policies emphasize standards and accountability. State and district systems sometimes lose sight of the importance of family involvement in terms of being a critical part of student achievement when worried about teacher quality and falling test scores. However, families play an important role in advocating for high performing schools and have been instrumental in supporting the creation of small schools and after-school programs as measures to improve student achievement in underperforming schools (Shirley, 1997; Gold, Simon & Brown, 2002). In Chicago, where local school councils must have a majority of parent members, elementary
schools that improved reading achievement over a seven-year period had effective councils (Moore, 1998). The family-school connection in relation to school policies is captured in the cases “Lunchtime at Sunnydale Elementary School” (Case 4), “Defining ‘Fine’” (Case 5), “Bilingual Voices and Parent Classroom Choices” (Case 6).

**How to Use the Casebook**

This casebook is organized to connect several theoretical perspectives within Ecological Systems Theory to the analysis of the cases. It presents four sections of theoretical approaches and corresponding cases: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Readers can use the cases to help them understand the theories and also apply the theories to analyze issues in the cases. For example, in “Motivation to Learn,” Deborah Stipek focuses attention on interactions and events that occur most frequently within the child’s microsystem, such as direct interactions between children and the adults who teach and parent them in the primary contexts of school and home. In the case “Tomasito Is Too Big to Hold Hands,” readers can consider how Tomasito’s teacher and family members can nurture intrinsic motivation. The case also invites the application of theoretical perspectives from other sections, such as Thomas Weisner’s description of middle childhood as an ecocultural project in which developmental pathways are determined by cultural activities that are organized into a child’s daily routines. Thus, although the sections provide structure, the cases, by their richness and complexity, lend themselves to analyses from multiple theoretical perspectives.

**Data Sources for the Cases**

The data sources for the cases are based on research conducted by members of the MacArthur Network on Successful Pathways through Middle Childhood, and as such focus on children whose ages range from 6–12 years:

- **Study**: California Childhoods: Institutions, Contexts, and Pathways of Development
  
  Related cases: Lunchtime at Sunnydale Elementary School; Staying on a Path Toward College

- **Study**: Children of Immigrants and Ethnic Identity Development
  
  Related case: Learning in the Shadow of Violence