Section C

“Determinants” of Development
Development

- How and why does development unfold the way it does for particular individuals?
Childhood and Adulthood

Childhood

Family socioeconomic status

Adulthood

Cardiovascular disease

?
Developmental Domains Interact

- Within the individual—biological, psychological, and social development are linked
  - Psychological processes important mediators between outside environment and the body, e.g., stress
  - Biological capacities may shape psychological and social outcomes, e.g., functional limitations
Contexts Shape Development

- Contexts: environments, systems outside the individual
- Think of individual as “embedded”
- Most are social (family network) or physical (built environment)
- Their characteristics shape individual development
Examples of Contexts and Their Characteristics

- **Neighborhood**
  - Presence of crime, social cohesion, physical deterioration

- **Families**
  - Socioeconomic status (SES), structure, qualities of relationships (e.g., conflict, cooperation), parenting

- **Workplace**
  - Relationships, health insurance (size of firm)

- **Nation**
  - Political system, economic regime, culture (not always national)
Alternative Approaches to Health

- Compartmentalized: definition of health and disciplinary training shape ideas about factors that influence health

- Integrative: recognize multiple levels of causation AND that these levels are potentially interrelated
  - By levels we mean levels of systemic organization: geographic, social, psychological, physiological
What Causes Cardiovascular Disease?

- **Physiological**
  - Buildup of arterial plaque, genetic susceptibility

- **Psychological**
  - Hostile personality

- **Behavioral**
  - Smoking, high fat diet, lack of medical care

- **Social**
  - Stress, poverty, social isolation

- **Geographic**
  - High crime, low amenity neighborhood
“While the disciplines concerned with health research may be separated conceptually, methodologically, and administratively, the process about which they are concerned are inextricably linked.”
— Anderson, 1998

Without multilevel research we will miss these interdependencies
Multilevel approach to health takes into account health determinants acting at different levels of systemic organization and seeks to understand linkages among them.

Does not mean everyone does everything!

But strong mandate for multidisciplinary and “transdisciplinary” work.

Principal of proximity suggests especially fruitful collaborations will be among adjacent levels.
Overlaps with Life Course Perspective

- Contexts at social, physical environment levels
Implications

- The end of reductionism (someday)

- Beyond nature vs. nurture

- Allowing for individual agency
  - Transactional approaches to development

- Watershed, but huge challenge to “science as usual”