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**Review of *Good Kids from Bad Neighborhoods: Successful Development in Social Context*. Delbert S. Elliott, Scott Menard, Bruce Rankin, Amanda Elliott, William Julius Wilson and David Huizinga. Reviewed by Stephanie Cosner Berzin.**

Stephanie Cosner Berzin  
*Boston College*

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their origins in the Reformation. The contemporary material will probably be of considerable interest to the reader. One suggestion that might have made the reading more enjoyable is for the author to have interjected the description of national policies with personal narratives and interviews, newspaper clippings, and the like. Women who had lived in more than one system—Americans who moved to France, for example, or Swedes who moved with their young children to the United States, could relate their experiences; such accounts would have livened up the content and made it more relevant and meaningful for the reader.

Katherine van Wormer  
University of Northern Iowa

Delbert S. Elliot, Scott Menard, Bruce Rankin, Amanda Elliot, William Julius Wilson and David Huizinga. *Good Kids from Bad Neighborhoods: Successful Development in Social Context*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. \$80.00 hardcover, \$30.99 papercover.

Although youth development is a highly investigated topic, research into youth in poor neighborhoods has often focused on relative disadvantage and negative outcomes. There has been substantial work outlining the difficulties youth from these neighborhoods face as they transition through adolescence and into adulthood. Low educational attainment and high rates of problem behavior have become common characteristics associated with youth from low income neighborhoods. Researchers have focused on how contextual factors related to neighborhoods, family, school, and peer group contribute to these outcomes; however, seldom has anyone examined these contextual influences in tandem.

In this important work, Delbert Elliot and his colleagues attempt to understand the multiple contextual influences on youth development. They address how youth manage to succeed given the difficult circumstances of their disadvantaged neighborhoods. The book extensively describes the results of a multi-site study examining youth development in neighborhoods in Denver and Chicago. The initial chapter

provides a brief introduction to the topic and to the study, though the authors could have expanded their discussion of past research. The second chapter continues laying the framework for the book as it outlines the study, including data sources, sampling, and measures. There is a detailed and impressive description and definition of neighborhoods. Chapter three finishes the introduction, as it defines neighborhood effects and the conditions of good and bad neighborhoods.

After providing this foundation, the book launches into a discussion of findings in chapters 4-8, building the explanatory model and adding contextual effects, including neighborhood, family, school, and peer group. Each chapter outlines the existing research on the context and then presents neighborhood-level and individual-level effects on development. Chapter 9 presents the full model, incorporating the multiple contexts previously described, neighborhood, family, school, and peer. Chapter 10 provides conclusions and suggests implications for programs and policy. An appendix provides detailed analysis tables for the interested reader.

The conclusion of the book suggests that neighborhood influence on outcomes at the individual level is modest; most individual level variation occurs within neighborhoods rather than between neighborhoods. The study suggests a range of variation in parenting, school, and peer context within neighborhoods, rather than supporting the notion that positive contexts are only found within certain types of neighborhoods. Additionally, the combined effect of these multiple contexts has an even stronger impact on youth development than individual context. Further, there appears to be a stronger effect of positive parent, school, and peer contexts within disadvantaged neighborhoods than in advantaged neighborhoods. Social class was not strongly associated with who was and who was not successful within disadvantaged neighborhoods; though race, particularly for Hispanic and African American youth, does put youth at risk for poor developmental outcomes. Finally, it is important to note that the vast majority of youth in the study, including those from disadvantaged neighborhoods, appear to be doing well on measures of positive youth development. These findings have enormous implications for sociology and social welfare, as it challenges the

notion that adolescents in disadvantaged neighborhoods are condemned to poor outcomes.

Although the authors provide a strong and compelling study, the book's primary weakness stems from the relatively short outline of the book and the minimal discussion of placing this study within the current research context. The authors do not do an adequate job preparing the reader for what's to come and suggesting how this study pushes our thinking on youth development beyond the current literature. The study itself could have been strengthened through the use of longitudinal data, additional sample sites, and additional variables that capture characteristics of social capital in neighborhoods.

However, the book's strengths lie in its attempts to grapple with the complex contextual issues affecting the lives of adolescents. The authors go beyond the one-dimensional approach as their work articulates and tests a framework for understanding the impact of multiple contexts on youth development. Additionally, the authors address not just whether neighborhood influences youth development, but what the contextual mechanisms are through which this occurs. As they provide this important study in helping us understand youth development, they also push the field of social inquiry to consider the influence of multiple contexts on all aspects of life.

Stephanie Cosner Berzin  
Boston College

Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal.  
*Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches.*  
Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2006. \$35.00  
hardcover, \$18.00 papercover.

*Polarized America* is a political science book that joins the burgeoning list of academic and popular writing about the growth of economic inequality in the United States. This