Children's Development as Participation in Everyday Practices across Different Institutions

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Children participate in different institutional collectives in their everyday life. Home, school, and kindergarten are the institutional contexts that most children share. Although there are variations between home practices and school practices, they collectively share a common core framed by societal conditions. In drawing upon Vygotsky's (1998) theory of the social situation of development and Hedegaard's (2009) theory of development conceptualised as the child's participation within and across several institutions at the same time, it has been possible to examine how school practices influence home practice and the child's social situation of development. A case study of an Australian child's participation across different institutions (family and school) was undertaken to capture and analyse the dynamic processes through which development was afforded. In the case study there was a large disjunction between institutional practices of the home and school that the child had to negotiate. Due to teacher knowledge of only the child's relation to the school institution, and not the home institution, the affordances for development and the child's changing relations to his environment, were invisible to the educators in this study. The findings suggest foregrounding an understanding of children's development as changes in children's activities and thereby changing their relations to reality *across institutional practices* in order to support a broader view of development in early childhood education.

INTRODUCTION

This article builds upon Vygotsky's (1998) Cultural-Historical approach and his concept of the social situation of development. Our orientation seeks to capture and analyse the different institutional collectives in children's everyday life, such as home, school and kindergarten. As has been noted by Hedegaard (2009), each institutional collective has its own practice traditions,

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which are brought to bear on any given situation. How a child engages and participates in these institutions influences how a child develops. Children's motives and competences for participating in family and school/kindergarten are dialectically related to the family's and school practice and the values for helping children to grow up in these institutions.

This article draws on a shared research project that took place in Copenhagen and Melbourne and that focussed on children´s development through participation in practices across institutions. The empirical presentation will draw primarily on a case study of one Australian family with a focus on the eldest child and the childrearing practices and activities he participates in across home and school.

In the final part of this article a discussion is presented, where we argue with the support of the case study, that child development has to be conceptualised through the change in the child's activities that affords a change in the child's relations to the institutions the child is a part of. We also argue that a broader view of child development would afford a better alignment in practices across institutional contexts and support an appreciation for the developmental opportunities possible in homes and in the community.

DEVELOPMENT AS A REVOLUTIONARY TRANSITION

Vygotsky (1998) argued that the dominant perspectives on child development highlight a linear path where deviating from "the normal path" can be considered as "diseases" of development" (p. 191). Educators look for and expect particular behaviours; when they are not forthcoming, concern is expressed about the individual in question. This view of child development, as a naturally evolving process, is embedded within the institutionalised thinking of early childhood education in most European heritage countries (Bodrova, 2008; Bodrova & Leong, 2001).

In his time, Vygotsky argued for a different perspective of child development. He put forward a dialectical process "in which a transition from one stage to another is accomplished not as an evolving process but as a revolutionary process" (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 193). Vygotsky argued that a dialectical approach to development invites the teacher to be continually projecting learning beyond the child's current capacities, but will do so in ways which connect with the child's growing sense of themselves within their communities/institutions. This particular perspective encourages teachers to examine context as well as the children's zones of proximal development when making judgements about children and when planning for learning. A conception of development as a revolutionary transition provides an alternative conceptual framework (Kravtsova, 2006), and helps teachers move beyond the present developmental conceptual framework, as it foregrounds the cultural institutional context and the specific child's lived experience.

An important concept in Vygotsky's revolutionary theory was the *social situation of development*. In this view of development it is not just the child that changes, nor is it the environment that changes, but it is the *child's relations* to the environment that changes (Kravtsova, 2006).

A cultural-historical perspective would not consider the environment as something outside of the child, as a "circumstance of development, as an aggregate of objective conditions existing without reference to the child" (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 198). Rather, Vygotsky argued that the child has a special relationship to social reality, which is related to specific ages. It is when the child's social situation of development changes that his or her consciousness of the environment changes.

Changes in the child's social situation is related to Vygotsky's (1998) concept of crises, because as the child's competence changes and their capacities are restructured, new competences are

demanded. The reconstruction of the child's competences is accompanied by reconstruction of the child's consciousness to reality. Vygotsky labelled this as neoformations (sometimes called new formations; see Kravtsova, 2006). Neoformations occurs towards the end of a given age period, when a child meets new demands upon entering a new institution, such as going to school, or meeting new demands related to the child's biological growth (e.g., walking). Hedegaard (2009) gave an example of a Danish child attending a kindergarten where the child's social situation is gradually changed by his parents' expectation that he will soon be entering school. The child himself acquires an orientation towards being a school child, who will do school learning. This orientation does not fit within the everyday activities of the kindergarten, and this creates a conflict for the child. The child becomes angry with his kindergarten teacher because she positions him as a kindergarten child who should engage him in story reading in a warm and cuddly manner. His behaviour changes when the teacher takes a nonfiction book that appears more school-like. The new competences and orientation that this child had acquired, and demonstrated through being angry at how he was being positioned, signifies a new relation (a neoformation in his relations) to his surroundings.

The concept of the social situation of development is expressed differently across particular age periods (Kravtsov, 2008). Institutional learning and context become important elements of a child's social situation.

The social situation of a child is dependent on the society and cultural context in which the child is embedded. Different cultural contexts foreground particular social situations, which in turn position children to actively engage and take up particular participation structures. In Vygotsky´s theory of development, a revolutionary changing process is framed as socially defined crisis points.

In drawing upon a large corpus of cross-cultural research, Barbara Rogoff (1990, 1998, 2003) has argued that "*development can be understood only in light of the cultural practices and circumstances of their communities— which also change*" (Rogoff, 2003, pp. 3–4). In Rogoff's view, culture not only gives conditions for defining development but frames the contexts in which the development of children is supported. Rogoff (2003) argued that development can be viewed as a transformation of participation in cultural activities. Through this transformation, individual roles change and developmental transitions in communities become evident. Individual transformation through participation means that not only do individuals change, but they change the communities in which they live.

As suggested by Rogoff, Mosier, Mistry, and Göncü (1998) we need to begin to understand "the development of children in the context of their own communities" and this requires the "study of the local goals and means of approaching life" (Rogoff et al., 1998, p. 228).

Hedegaard (2009) has researched the construction of childhood and development within the framework of the institution, the society, and the individual. Her work draws extensively upon Vygotsky's (1998) seminal critique of child development just discussed. In line with Vygotsky's work on a dialectical approach to development, and the social situation of development, Hedegaard (2009) takes a step further than both Rogoff and Vygotsky by relating society and community with the concept of institutional practice. She depicts the relations in Figure 1 in the form of model of the societal conditions for cultural practices in institutions in which person's activities has to be considered. She focuses on the relationship between children's activities as related to practices in different institutions.

Like Vygotsky she conceptualised development not as a process within the child but rather development takes place when the child participates in practices within their cultural community.
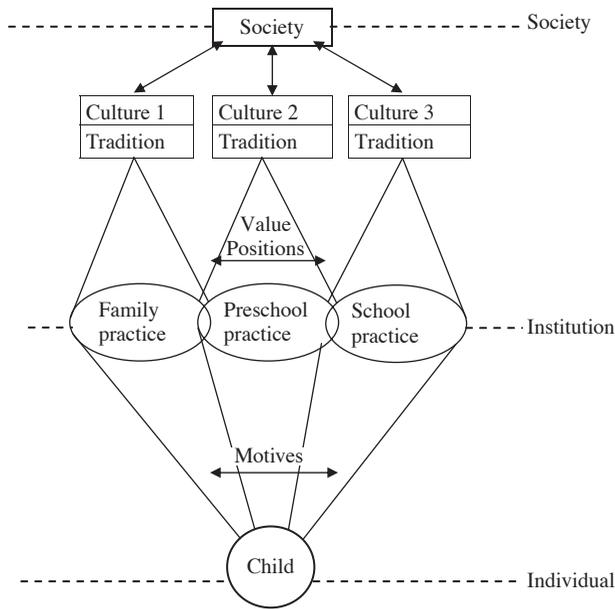
FIGURE 1 A model of children's learning and development through participation in institutional practice (Hedegaard, 2009, p. 73).

When the development of the child within her or his cultural community does not match what is expected or accepted as the "normal" developmental trajectory by the institution, conflicts arise.

Hedegaard (2009) has drawn attention to the significance of children's participation in different institutional contexts for shaping their development and discussed how practices in these institutions create sociocultural pathways for children. In gaining understandings of how children participate in different institutions, it is possible to gain greater insights into children's changing relations with reality. Vygotsky's concept of the social situation of development is extended through Hedegaard's theorisation of institutional practices in relation to children's activity as they negotiate the practice transitions within and across institutions. Hedegaard's (2009), inspired by Vygotsky (1998), identified crises in children's lives, which she believes provide the dynamics for development. She argued that when children enter a new institutional context, where expectations and practices are unfamiliar, children experience demands which can result in a crisis in their social situation.

In Hedegaard's model (Figure 1) the *societal perspective* depicts the conditions for institutional practice as political material conditions, cultural traditions, and values. For example, in many schools, there will be a classroom teacher, a certain number of children (depending upon the regulations set by a society), and particular kinds of materials available for participants to use. At the same time there is also specific procedures for participating in school practice, as well as a set of values about what is a good practice for children's learning activity. The *institutional practices* in the model depicts family practice, kindergarten practice, and school practice, but in principle institutional practice can also refer to practices in after-school clubs, at work, in church, and so

on. They are places and spaces organised within a society that have their own procedures/rules and traditions for daily practices. Finally, the *person's perspective* (as shown in the model) is reflected in a child's activities in different institutions.

In our analyses of the case study of a child from an Australian family we have combined Vygotsky's (1998) concept of the child's social situation of development with the relations depicted in Figure 1. This has led us to focus on the child's social situation of development in relation to the child's activities afforded through the different institutional practices.

THE PROJECT: CHILDREN'S EVERYDAY LIFE ACROSS DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS[1]

In the overall study design of the project, *Children's everyday life across different institutions*, four focus families with preschool and early school-aged children from Denmark and two families from Australia were invited to participate in the study. In this article, the observations from only one family *the Peninsula family* are discussed in relation to the eldest boy of the family—Andrew (5 years). Families in the Australian context were selected from low socioeconomic communities, as identified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The Australian Bureau of Statistics gives information on the economic status of all communities within Australia. The principal of the school gave information about the project to all families who had a child in the first year of school and who had younger siblings. Families with very young children afford data-gathering opportunities for observing transitions from home to school and childcare, with younger children later graduating and moving from childcare to school. Two families volunteered, and both families had parents without employment and who were in receipt of government assistance (housing and financial benefits for everyday living), and both families had one child at school and three siblings at home or at childcare/preschool. Both families have a European heritage background.

The Research Question

The study reported in this article focused on how practices at home influence the child's activity in school, and how practices in school influence the demands on the child at home. The study also sought to follow the transition of the child across these institutions in order to see how different demands influence a child's social situation of development.

Procedure

The families were followed during different parts of the day and week. In Australia the families were videotaped in the home and community. The observation sites included family activities, transitions to school/preschool, school activities, visits to sporting events, and routines (e.g., going shopping). All field visits were videotaped by two researchers (handheld cameras following family members). Video data were viewed after each visit, and field notes in relation to each

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[1]Associate Professor Dr. Jytte Bang and Associate Professor Dr. Pernille Hviid participated in the Danish part of this research cooperation.

TABLE 1
Overview of Observational Schedule

Visit One (2 hours of video observations):	The research team met the mother and children outside of the house on their return from school. The research team provided snacks (and left the family with buns and chickens to eat for dinner) and videotaped from 4:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m.
Visit Two (2 hours of video observations):	Videotaping took place at the house ten minutes after the children were scheduled to arrive home with their mother from school. (4:30 p.m. –6:30 p.m.).
Visit Three (3 hours of video observations):	Filming took place from 6:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.
Visit Four (11.5 hours of video observations and 4 hours of observations made in situ on computer).	The research team arrived at 7:30 a.m. to accompany the family on their walk to school and childcare. The family were videotaped getting ready for school/ childcare from 7:30 a.m. until school began. Two of the children and the mother were videotaped having breakfast at the school in the breakfast program. The researchers videotaped and made observations on computer in situ at the school until the end of the day. The research assistant walked with the mother and children to the childcare centre and filmed the children being picked up at 4:00.
Visit Five (3.5 hours of video observations)	School pick up, shopping excursion, and snack time were videotaped. The evening meal preparation and the evening meal being eaten were also videotaped (videotaping from 3:00 – 6:30).

video tape were expanded to contextualise all video material gathered. Digital video recording and computer organization using Imovie ensured that all clips could be logged in detail. The video cameras began recording just prior to entering the home, childcare, or school grounds. The cameras were turned off on leaving the research site. In the home, recordings of family events by two researchers were important, because the children moved about rooms and went from inside the house to outside the house.

The data set for the Peninsula family was 50 hours of video recordings, with annotated contextual comments for each one hour of video data (description overview, activities, relationship to observer). Each one hour of video was examined in relation to the children's activity conflicts/problems, parents views on demands, spatial and physical considerations, borders (themes expressed in either institution appearing in the other institution), and points of interest.

In the overall study, the period of data generation was 12 months. This article gives examples of data from the first two months of the observation period, gathered over five separate visits, and representing 25 hours of video data. The time frame and visit protocol for the study of the Peninsula family is summarised in Table 1.

The Peninsula Family

The family is made up of a mother and father in their late 30s, a 5-year-old boy who attends school (Andrew), a 4-year-old boy who goes to kindergarten (Nick), a 3-year-old boy (JJ), and a 16-month-old girl (Elsie) who both attend childcare two days per week. The father has casual work from time to time, and the family is supported by government funding. They live in a government house approximately two kilometres from the centre of the urban town in which they live. They do not have a car, which is challenging for the family, as they live in a rural community southwest of a major capital city in Australia. Their house is located in a cul-de-sac, next door to a very small park. The house is sparsely furnished and well organised. The house has a

small detached building that is rented to a women who is approximately 35 years of age. She uses the facilities in the house. All the family members live together.

Due to the father having a restraining order placed on him at one stage, the family has regular visits by social workers from the Department of Human Services. The mother expressed the view during the final observation that "we have Family services in our lives, and since the restraining order, and even though M [father] lives with us, we haven't been able to get rid of them."

The Peninsula School

The Peninsula School is located in a low socioeconomic community. The children and their families mostly live in close proximity to the school. The principal of the school grew up in the community and is well known to many of the families. The school has a breakfast program, employs a part-time speech pathologist, and is currently seeking funds to provide mentoring and counselling to children and their families through a pastoral care scheme (via a chaplaincy program). The school has an additional teacher who does art and sports across the school. There are about 120 children at the school.

Analysis

The analysis sought to show the social situation and activities of the oldest child, Andrew, who was 6 years old and who had just started school within the context of the family and school practices. Data were examined within and across observations (videotapes) and field notes (digitally linked to video clips) in relation to the cultural-historical concepts of transitions, demands, and conflicts (see Hedegaard, 2008) and interactional patterns and participation structures for learning already noted by Rogoff, Mistry, Göncü, and Mosier (1993).

The activity categories that emerged through Andrew's participation in *the family practices* were "simultaneous participation structures for communicating"; "machine gun fire communication"; and "geographical roaming." The activity categories that emerged for Andrew in relation to *the school's practices* included "successive participation structures for communicating" and "alternating attention management." *The teachers demands* in the classroom could be categorised as "individualistic orientation" and "assumed evolving natural developmental trajectory"; the *transitional categories* that emerged for Andrew were "geographical scanning" and "strategic positioning."

Practice Traditions in the Peninsula Family

The family routine follows a 6:30 a.m. rise in preparation for school. The mother helps the children to dress. This is done by moving between rooms, simultaneously dressing three of her four children at once (children are usually moving between rooms). Once the other children are ready, the mother takes Elsie from her cot, dressers her, and places her into a three-wheeler stroller, which is parked next to the front door. She is given a bottle of milk to drink in the stroller. The other children either help themselves to the fridge (e.g., where there appears to be leftovers from the evening meal, a bottle of milk, and sometimes a quarter of a loaf of bread, plus sauces, etc.) or wait for the school breakfast, which is provided at the school for a nominal charge. Breakfast at school is from 8.00 a.m.

The children and the mother walk to the childcare centre, where Elsie and JJ are left for two sessions per week. The mother continues on to the school to take the eldest child to school and to have breakfast. Nick accompanies them and has breakfast at the school. Nick is taken to pre-school by the father twice per week for kindergarten sessions. The mother explains that it is not possible to do the 5 km walk to the school and kindergarten and have both arrive on time. She collects the children for a 3:15 pick up at the school, walking to the childcare centre and arriving home at 4:15. If it is raining, the mother has indicated that other parents at the school often drop her and the children back home.

The family return home to eat a snack (provided by the researchers at the time of their visits) at 4:00. The children move between rooms throughout the snack period (which had no real ending point). The mother makes herself coffee and lights a cigarette, and the father is usually outside talking to visitors or smoking or inside with the children observing the activities while drinking a cool drink or is in the bedroom playing computer games. Both parents move between rooms, with the mother moving all about the house throughout this time. Later the father or the mother will prepare the evening meal. On some occasions the mother will hear Andrew read his reading book in the lounge room (initiated once by the mother and once by the child). The TV is on occasionally, but with the sound low. The father appears regularly from the bedroom, inviting the children to talk about or do things to show the researchers. When directed to go outside, the children will go out and ride their bikes in the backyard or in the park when the mother or father accompanies them.

At mealtimes the children will sit at the table or on the table for brief periods, while the mother and father stand and watch. The children will move off or about the room during meal-times if not directed to sit. The mother will eventually sit down to spoon feed Elsie her solids. Depending upon the type of meal, the children will either sit briefly or take their food and walk to other parts of the house. Leaving the table with food is discouraged by the father.

After dinner the children move about the rooms while the mother methodically cleans and tidies around the house (but also moving about supervising the children like an air traffic con-troller). All members of the household tend to stand rather than sit. The father plays computer games or is outside smoking and drinking cool drinks. The mother prepares a bottle and puts Elsie into the cot and sends any child who is overtired directly to bed. The parents will usually change the children into their pyjamas in the lounge room—putting all but Andrew into disposable nap-pies (this is done directly on the floor). They will then go to bed, but will call out, cry, but do not leave their room. The parents retire to bed to watch TV.

Practice Traditions in the Peninsula School

At school Andrew sits on the mat in front of the teacher or at the back of the group on the floor. The roll is called and the children are expected to answer to say they are present. After roll call, the teacher discusses the literacy activity that the children are to do at their desks. The children move to their desks and undertake the tasks. Some children go from the room to immediately outside of the room to read to a parent helper. On the day we observed, two parents were assist-ing children read, including the mother in this study. The children work by themselves, and the teacher moves about the room observing and assisting the children at their desks. The children move around the room to gather materials as required. At 10:30 the children move as a group for specialist oral language development classes organised by a speech therapist. The children sit in

small groups (class teacher, the school secretary, and the speech pathologist lead these groups) and do oral language games. The children break for morning tea at 11:00. When they return to class, they participate in mathematics—following the same structure as for literacy. The children go from class to the sports area, where they sit in a circle and listen to the instructions of the sports teacher. The children play games with balls and observe a specialist basketball player talk to them and show them ball-handling skills. The children practice these after instruction. The children break for lunch at 1:30 and return to class after one hour for a final brief lesson before going home.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study are reported in this section in relation to the differences noted between the practice traditions of the school and the practice traditions of the family and the different possibility they give for Andrew's activities.

Geographical Roaming at Home

One of the defining features of the Peninsula family was the way interactions were occurring within the boundary of the house and backyard. Conversations took place across walls—both inside and outside. "Listening in" across walls was common. The children were keenly aware of what was happening in each room. Any slight change, incident, or the introduction of something of interest immediately brought children from all corners of the house back to the point of interest. Listening in across walls was facilitated by the continued movement of all members of the household between rooms. With the exception of the dog (who occasionally sat in the sofa chairs), the adults and children rarely sat down—but rather appeared to be moving between rooms and around each other (like a dance) throughout the scheduled visits. In Figure 2, an analysis of one hour of videotape was undertaken in order to document movement for each member of the household (noting that Elsie at this time was not mobile). The adults moved around a little less than the children, with the father tending to move back and forth between the main living room and the parents' bedroom (marked as M & D room). The children's movement (Nick, JJ, Andrew) followed the parents into the bedroom, or movement was independent of the parents as the children moved back and forth into the kitchen and the living room. Figure 2 only shows the movement from room to room, rather than the movement within each room, which was a continued flow of activity from person to person, from furniture (standing on, next to, or over) to furniture, and changes in directions of the children as they moved around the available floor space within particular rooms.

Through the continued movement, it was possible for the children to keenly observe the researchers, their mother, their father, Millie the dog, and Sara, who lived in a free standing building in the backyard, while eating their snacks and replenishing their drinks (with support from adults) from the fridge. Eating snacks occurred across three rooms of the house and the corridor.

During formal mealtimes, the children always took their food from a central point (kitchen table) in the kitchen, and within a time span of a few minutes to up to 10 minutes, they moved away from

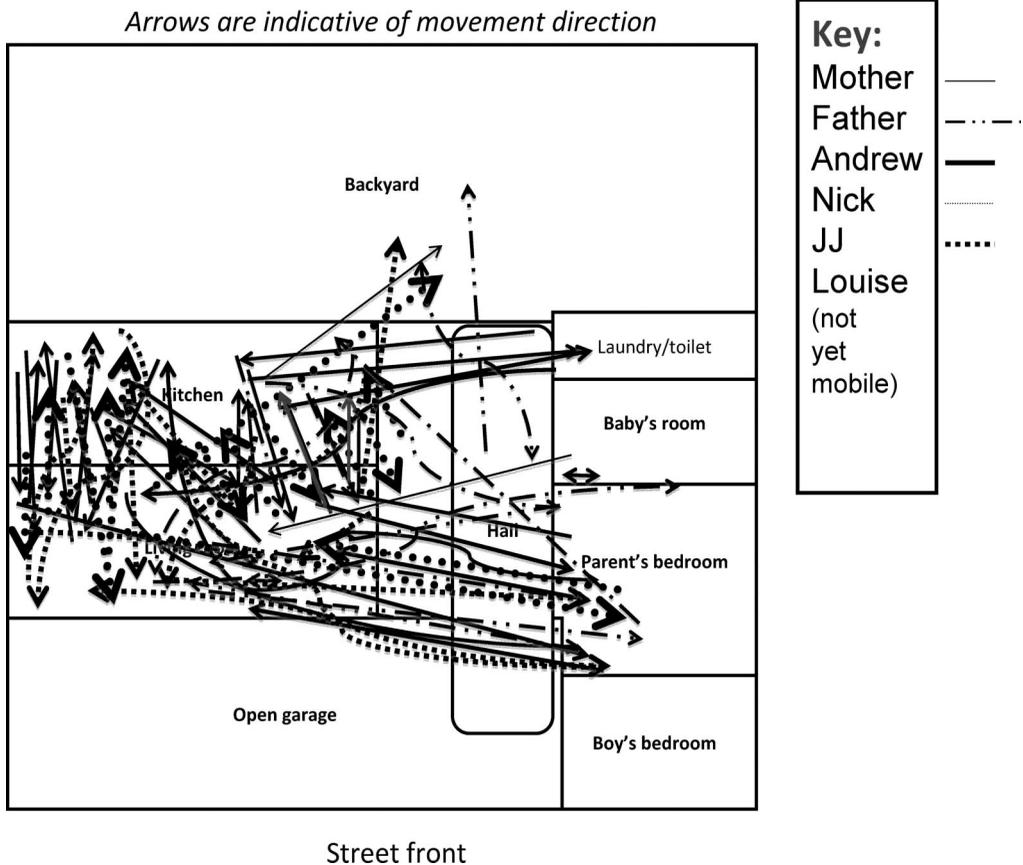*Arrows are indicative of movement direction*

FIGURE 2   Movement around the house.

the kitchen into other areas of the house. Eating often occurred across rooms. What is significant here is that the closeness and connections often exhibited by those families who sit around a table eating their meals also occurred in the Peninsula family but with more geographical distance (Blum-Kulka, 1997). In the Peninsula family, looking to each other while eating, and sharing food and conversations while eating, occurred across walls and from room to room. The children and adults communicated with each other in the same manner as observed by families who are seated next to each other during mealtimes. The rapid movements from room to room ensured that they could observe and be a part of any activity and communication that was taking place anywhere in the house or backyard. Movement from room to room also meant that anything being transmitted situationally or nonverbally could also be followed. The children exhibited a kind of "roaming behaviour," which allowed them to be geographically distant from one another but to maintain close communication across "walls." The parents also exhibited this roaming behaviour. In addition, the dog too roamed throughout the rooms, but not as consistently as the adults or the children.

Geographical Scanning in Shool

In contrast to Andrew's free geographical roaming at home, at school Andrew was in a controlled situation throughout the day. The routine that has been established allowed for the movement of groups of children. There were only two rooms of interest (classroom and the corridor area where small group reading was occurring), both of which Andrew could see from his desk. During the whole group time, Andrew either was sliding across the mat to locate himself either towards the back of the group so he can see the teacher, the board, and the backs of all the children or moved to the front where he could see all the children but where he had to make a 180 degree head swing to see the teacher and the board. In contrast to home, Andrew spent most of the day at school sitting. He sat on the mat at the front of the room, and he sat on his chair during individual group work. He sat in small groups in another room to do oral language development with the speech pathologist. During sport he had to sit on the basketball when being given instructions or when observing the teacher, and he had to sit on the ground to play "duck-duck-goose" (circle chasing game). He also had to sit to eat his morning tea and his lunch. When he finished his food, he spent the remainder of the time standing, running, or jumping throughout the whole of the outdoor play area around the school. He moved from individuals to groups of children throughout the entire time while scanning and roaming the whole environment.

Andrew's scanning of his environment was continuous. In all video observations of Andrew at school, his head movements follow any activity or sound (Example 1), and his eyes scan the room every few seconds (Example 2) while doing his schoolwork.

Example 1:

After sport, the children are taken back to the classroom. Children are seated on the floor in front of their teacher, who is standing at the front of the classroom. The children read the numbers that are pinned up at the back of the room. The teacher stops and reprimands a child for shouting. Children then read the numbers backward. "I remember, we have to do it quietly," says one child. Andrew sits facing the front of the room, but looks at the teacher, then immediately back to child being scolded, then immediately to the child in front of him, giving him a soft hug (video observation 6—at school; Tapes 3 & 4).

Example 2:

All the children are directed to sit at their tables (approximately six children per table) and to trace around letters (letter h) on large laminated sheets. Andrew is sitting at his desk, he looks up and watches his mother and other children moving back and forth into the classroom, sucks the texta lid, and spins his head back to look at the children sitting at his table. He turns his head back to his laminated sheet, for two seconds, then he looks up at the other children, licks the fabric duster, and wipes texta marks off his sheet whilst scanning the room. He then leans on his left arm and continues to trace letters. He continues to look around the room, sweeping his eyes and body 180 degrees, in order to see what is going on in the room (video observation 6—at school; Tape 1).

At school Andrew's eye movements were rapid but intent and focussed on what was happening in his environment. He appeared to be able to simultaneously do his work and to look about the room. The tracing activity (Example 2) was something he could easily participate in, as it was a self-directed task (even if the directions of tracing where not known, he could continue to work). He appeared to complete his work in the same amount of time as the other children. His interactions with others (verbally and nonverbally) were brief but were part of an ongoing processing of observations of the class dialogue and dynamics throughout the room. Andrew was fully in tune with what was happening in his environment while was engaged in the individual task each child had been assigned.

TABLE 2
Geographical Roaming and Scanning

Geographical Roaming at Home	Geographical Scanning at School
• The family are experts in geographical roaming. The children keenly observe, continually move between rooms keeping an eye on what is happening in each room, and 'listen in' across rooms. • Roaming (not sitting) is valued by the family.	• **The teacher** regularly changes the learning spaces for the children. She organises for the children to be in different spaces within the room or go to other rooms/outdoors. • **Andrew** sits on the carpet, but moves his head and body around regularly to scan the room. The same behaviours are observed at the table, except that it is his eyes that do the roaming, whilst he continues to reposition himself on the chair (alternating between sitting on knees and bottom, in different angles).

In both examples, it was important for Andrew to know what was going on around him while he did what the teacher asked. For the teacher it was important that Andrew stayed seated, completing the individual activity set (Example 2), or sat still with his eyes focused on the teacher during whole group mat sessions (Example 1). She wanted Andrew to know how to correctly form the letter "h" so that he can write this letter and to participate in reading activities. Geographical roaming at home and geographical scanning at school are summarised in Table 2. The differences between home and school are vast.

At home Andrew participated in cultural activities where it was important to continually roam between rooms noting what was happening. Paying close attention to all the activities of the family members simultaneously was important in the Peninsula family. Communication and interactions occurred across walls. Sitting was the exception and "a geography of interaction" was valued. All the family members exhibited these roaming type behaviours for communication during the observational period. At school sitting was the norm for Andrew. To participate in the school practices, Andrew had transformed his roaming behaviour with his legs, to strategically placing himself in the room so that all areas could be observed, and through continually moving his head and eyes across the room—to scan regularly the activities of all the 20 children in his class. This scanning behaviour was misunderstood by the teachers. From their institutional perspective of development, Andrew should be paying close attention to his work and to the teacher—not to all the activities of the children within the room. In many Australian schools it is important for the teacher to be orchestrating what children should pay attention to. The children's focus of attention should be oriented to their work or to the teacher and not directed to the group. The children should be working alone, and when needed should seek help from the teacher. In many Australian schools, children predominantly spend their time seated. Sessions usually last 30 minutes, and then children are moved to another location—but always returning to a sitting position. These institutional norms are common and strongly shape how children move about, how they interact with other children, and who and what they spend time with and on.

Simultaneous and Multipartner Interactions at Home

The participation structures for supporting learning which were noted in the Peninsula family tended to show the mother poised ready to support her children. The family context that was

mapped through video recordings by the two researchers indicated that multiple voices and multiple nonverbal interactional patterns were noted throughout the family visits. The communication style of the mother showed that on most occasions she was able to continue her conversation with the researcher, to supply drinks and food to her four children, sort out disputes between children, to observe the dog, and to invite her children to share verbally and physically things they liked doing. These exchanges were rapid and occurred mostly simultaneously. In Example 3 these interactions are evident.

Example 3

The mother follows the researchers into the lounge room. The mother talks to the researchers as she moves the "snacks" to the kitchen. She returns to the lounge room (remaining standing). The children follow her into the kitchen and retrieve a snack. They immediately move into the lounge room and walk around the room. The mother and researchers talk about the project and JJ indicates he wishes to have a drink. The mother continues to discuss the project with the researchers as she takes a biscuit from Elsie, breaks it in half and gives half to Nick, and eats the rest herself. At the same moment she takes the drink from JJ and puts it onto the fish tank out of reach. She then moves to the kitchen and returns, continuing her conversation and inviting the children to tell the researchers about the things they like doing. During this time she also puts some of the snacks into the bedroom out of way of the children (where all the things which are nice to eat or drink are kept—a small fridge is in the bedroom). Nick and Andrew emerge from the kitchen with drinks in hand. The mother stands poised with hands slightly extended as the children need to have their drinks delivered and returned to them from the fish tank. The children hold conversations with the researcher, with each other and with the mother using short sentences and increasing their volume to ensure they are heard by their mother (when they need something) or the researcher. Throughout the snack period, JJ moves from person to person speaking, whilst Nick moves around him, and also shares information about how he likes to play with the researchers. Over this time, Millie the dog runs into the lounge room and interacts with the children and with the researchers (chewing at the researchers arm as she films the interactions and eating small bits of biscuit dropped by the children). The mother removes the dog on a number of occasions through verbal and later physical action as she cares for the children and discusses the project with the researchers (Vide observation at home, visit one).

The mother exhibited the ability to attend to several ongoing events. She was poised and ready to offer assistance to her children. This type of behaviour has also been noted by Rogoff et al. (1993, p. 119) in their research in Mexican communities, and they have labelled it "air traffic controller" behaviour. However in their research, responsiveness was accompanied by nonverbal interactions where the flow of activity required little need for children calling upon caregivers to gain their attention. However, in the Peninsula family, the children regularly competed for attention through verbal exchanges. The children closely observed all the events surrounding them. Their keen observational skills, along with their verbal persistence, ensured that their needs were attended to during the interview sessions in the family home. In this study, the mother and the children exhibited "air-traffic controller" posturing but also displayed this capacity verbally, with increases in volume as punctuation marks within the ongoing multiple and simultaneous conversations that were occurring. The rapid and simultaneous verbal exchanges were like machine gun fire in multiple directions. These important participation structures for learning created a different social situation for development than families where specialised child-focused conversations are created, in a slow and alternating manner (see also Rogoff, 2003, Chapter 4). The patterns of interaction within the Peninsula family provide rich opportunities for rapid talk and expansive

TABLE 3
Interactions at Home and School

Interactions at Home	Interactions at School
• Helicopter interactions are valued, alongside of simultaneous and multiple communication partners	• **The teacher** allows the children so speak to each **other** during small group work, but during whole group activity with the teacher, turn taking is privileged, and signalled through 'putting up your hand'. Alternating patterns of communication are valued.
• Rapid "machine gun" talk is valued alongside of keen observation about when to fire conversation verbally and when to signal non-verbally	• **Andrew** attends to his task whilst simultaneously watching the children across the room, at his table, and following the movement of the teacher within the classroom. He also observes what is happening outside of the classroom in the hallway (where parents do reading with individual children).

communication channels to develop and be maintained. However, these interactional patterns are different to those valued in educational institutions, where interactional patterns mirror middle-class family practices for organising learning. In these institutions there is a great deal of "turn-taking" between the children and the teacher, often controlled through hand signals (e.g., put up your hands if you wish to speak/respond to the group/teacher). These traditional practices were also noted in Andrew's school and a summary of those institutional practices identified across home and school are shown in Table 3. For Andrew, there are great differences in the practice traditions within his family to the practice traditions found within his school. Table 2 and 3 summarise the major differences noted in this study. These differences have created a challenging context for Andrew to navigate and has meant that his focus of attention in school concentrates upon learning the new interactional patterns that are valued there, and the new styles of communication that are needed in order for him to work effectively in the school context. The transitions across institutions have the potential to create a crisis situation for Andrew. The practice traditions within Andrew's school demand sitting at a desk, staying contained within one classroom, concentrating upon the teacher or one's own work, and participating in alternating conversations with only one partner. These new practice traditions create disjunction but also generate new possibilities for Andrew's development. They offer an opportunity for Andrew to change the nature of his relationship to his environment and extend his understandings and skills in successfully managing a whole new system of interactions in a different institutional setting. The different demands across institutions necessitates that the child change his activities, changes that results in conflicts and thereby leads to a new social situation of development for Andrew.

Transitions Between Institutions

Throughout the data-gathering period the mother discussed a range of learning problems that had been identified by the school, within her family (cousins who attended special school), the speech therapist (as the voice of the paediatrician), and the protection worker who visited the home periodically. The mother specifically noted problems with language development and with Andrew's inability to focus on his schoolwork. In the next segment, the mother discusses Andrew's problems as she simultaneously attends to each child and the dog and organises snack food.

> Mum: He's had a few problems. But—he's, got a problem with not *focussing*. Which is, causing a *lack* of *concentration*.
>
> Researcher: Right yeah yes.
>
> Mum: but he's just got to like learn to *focus* a lot more on more concentration and I *think*—he'll be right.
>
> Mum: . . . but *yeah*, of a night time when I *pick* him up I ask her [the teacher] how he's going. She said today it wasn't focussing today properly. He had a bit of trouble focussing – but, I mean, he's still only, like in the end of May.

The mother's experiences with her extended family provided a direction for dealing with the suggested learning problems that were being drawn to her attention:

> Mum: I rather him *repeat* than have to go on to a *say*, *special development school* or something to be able to *learn*.
> But yeah I mean if he has to go repeat a grade, then **yeah**, we'll let him *repeat* but, hopefully he doesn't have to. (Home observation, visit 2).

In addition to the suggestion of Andrew repeating a year of school, the mother outlined later at another data collection visit that her son had been tested by a paediatrician to see if he had attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or attention deficit disorder (ADD) syndrome. The mother indicated that the paediatrician had ruled out ADHD but that he had ADD and could be treated with drugs.

> Mum: *[talking in kitchen to researcher in lounge room]* They had um, they got the result back from Aus Child the other day.
>
> Researcher: Oh yes.
>
> Mum: And—they're just waitin' to get some more paper work back, and they've said that he may have ADD.
>
> Researcher: Oh really?
>
> Mum: But they're just waiting' to get some more results back and then he may have to go in, see a Paediatrician about it. They ruling out the hyper activity side of it,—but yeah he may have, he may have . . .
> which is—*(Andrew looks up at his mother)* without the hyperactivity. Yeah.—If the hyperactive, ADH err no—AHDD—is—or with the hyperactivity, it means, they're just, out of control. They've been doing it with all the parents, that all the kids that are in Prep, they've been doing the speech pathology, *(Mother walks into kitchen talking)*, their language and everything but they've also been doing these other tests, and getting parents. (Home observation, Visit 3).

The mother resisted medication, because of its contents—"*. . . need to go on medication, and, I don't want him goin' on that bloody stupid medication, because, it's the same sort of stuff as what they use in speed*." The mother discusses with the researcher the contents of the drugs and the effect they would have on Andrew. "*So it's like them being on speed. But it's to, get them to concentrate and focus*." As the mother discusses this, Andrew runs across the room stomping his feet, so that the glow pads in his brand-new slippers will be activated.

In the context of Andrew wearing his new slippers (which emit light when he runs or jumps) the mum outlined both her teacher and the speech pathologist's assessment of Andrew's behaviour at school. With advice from these experts, she discussed how Andrew was exhibiting attention-seeking behaviour, and that it would be important for her to change his behaviour at home, if he has to concentrate at school and to avoid medication. The mother had taken onboard the school's

TABLE 4
Institutional Perspectives Presented to the Mother

Extended Family Perspectives on Development Presented by Mother	Teacher's Perspective on Development as Presented by Mother	Protection Workers Perspective as Presented by Mother	Paediatricians Perspective (via the Speech Therapist) as Presented by Mother
• Andrew may need to repeat a year of school or go to a special school if he does not catch up.	• Andrew has problems with focussing.	• Department of Human Services in their visits have assessed the physical and mental development of the children, advising them to buy pencils and paper and to do activities and have discussions with the children.	• Andrew is diagnosed as having ADD and requiring medication.
• Andrew's grandmother lets Andrew's mum read her books on *Bringing up Boys* by Steve Biddulph	• Her children have language development problems.		• To avoid medication, the Mother discusses the attention management behaviours she must institute in her interactions with Andrew.

need to modify Andrew's behaviour, accepting that the root cause of his lack of focus on one thing at a time was due to attention seeking. The school's diagnosis was made without an appreciation for Andrew's sophisticated geographical roaming skills and his multichannel attention management capacity.

Collectively, the areas that the mother focused on when discussing the development of her children indicate that from all sectors—family/friends; school; protection worker; paediatrician—that her children were being positioned in deficit against a natural evolving model of child development. Table 4 summarizes the information that the mother was drawing upon explain Andrew's development.

The developmental trajectory of the child in the home context lay in contrast to what was expected and valued in the school. The interactional patterns of the child in the school were misread by the teacher and Andrew was diagnosed by the teachers in the school as having learning difficulties due to hyperactivity.

Australian schools have traditionally taken responsibility for intervention into family life when children's developmental trajectories do not match those espoused by educators in the school. Schools have access to specialist who test for developmental milestones and who recommend interventions at home. For instance, speech pathologists, counsellors, medical practitioners, and social workers work closely with schools to support the orchestrated shaping of children and their families to achieve advertised (and implicit) desired developmental and leaning outcomes. Through continued testing and expressions of concern by the school towards the development of Andrew, the Peninsula family had positioned Andrew into deficit and explicitly stated that he should not receive any attention at home—as his behaviour was deemed to be "attention-seeking behaviour" (according to the school). As already noted, this was of great concern to the mother, as she had been told that if his behaviour did not change, he might need medication—something she was vehemently apposed to. Unfortunately, without a whole view of the social situation of

development for Andrew in the home, the school was unable to adequately tutor the mother into behaviour modification. In addition, the school was unable to appreciate how Andrew had already modified his behaviours from geographical roaming to geographical scanning—a most sophisticated behaviour adaptation that allowed Andrew to not as explicitly appear as disruptive to the school activities but allowed him to maintain his activity for keen observation of the "collective activity" of all the children in his class.

The social situation of development for Andrew was complicated, as it represented a mix of new and unfamiliar activities in the school alongside of known home activities and practices which were changing as a result of the mother's interaction with the school.

In this study, it is evident that assumptions about what is valued within schools has tended to be centered upon a universal set of developmental milestones and an expectation for particular childrearing practices which generate the same set of social conditions in homes as those valued in schools. However, as has already been shown, variations across communities in childrearing practices are common. Expectations and understandings are divergent even within cultural communities (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003).

Understanding the social situation of development for children is important for recognising the practices and values of the families. Conversely, it is also important to gain an understanding of the practices of the school. In this study, the school institution is extended, as it includes the speech pathologist, the paediatrician, and the protection worker. Through a wholeness approach to studying children's development we can see the contradictions or similarities across contexts of practices and values and the demands that this set for the child's activity and how it thereby creates his social situation of development.

DISCUSSION

This study drew upon Vygotsky's theoretical work on child development as the foundation for building a dialectical approach for the study of children in families, schools, and kindergartens. Capturing and analysing the dynamic processes through which the ontogenesis of psychological functioning is enacted, occurred through an examination of the perspectives of the child (the family) and the teacher (school). In this study we sought to examine the social situation of development for one child from one family. In particular, the child's participation across different institutions was analysed and discussed and the findings suggest that the transition between family and school represents a major crisis and thereby a turning point in the development of the eldest child.

Through analysing the activities of the child (collective and simultaneous attention to all the children), the concern of the mother (not wishing her child to be medicated and to be successful at school) within the context of geographical roaming at home and simultaneous interactions, and the demands of the school (sitting still, paying attention to your work and to the teacher so that you can learn) it was possible to map and understand the developmental trajectory of Andrew. The observations show that learning how to participate in "schooling" was a central line of development for Andrew. Gaining the perspectives of the child, family, and school are significant for realising a broader view of development and for ascertaining how a child's relations to institutional practices may change and a new social situation of development may emerge.

Family Perspective

The practice traditions within the Peninsula family that were valued included

- *Geographical roaming*—family members keenly observe, continually move between rooms keeping an eye on what is happening in each room, and "listen in" across rooms.
- *Rapid "machine gun" talk*—keen observation about when to fire conversation verbally and when to signal nonverbally, within a context of simultaneous exchanges and multiple communication partners.

The mother acted like an air traffic controller (see Rogoff et al., 1993), closely observing what was going on. Rogoff et al. (1993) used the term "air-traffic controller" monitoring to label the alert attention of the San Pedro caregivers, who demonstrated through the subtle roaming of the eyes to be on the look out for possibilities of things happening.

School Perspective

In this study it was shown that the interactional patterns valued in the home do not easily fit within the school context or the protection worker's view of child development. For Andrew, the institutions of the family and school were vastly different and he needed to learn new ways of being, and new ways of interacting in the school context. Andrew succeeded in adapting his activity of connecting with what was going on in his environment from geographical roaming to regularly scanning the room or covertly sliding across the carpet when seated in the whole group at the front of the class.

As Varenne and McDermott (1998) stated, research which maps family practices "tell us about cultural pattern and family variation, about what is controlled at the family level and what is not" (p. 56). The general conditions of learning must be understood if we are to make sense of the developing skills in subject areas such as literacy and numeracy. That is, we must understand the child's social situation of development in both the home and the school before we can begin to fully appreciate subject matter learning in schools. Andrew's geographical roaming would have been viewed as problematic for subject matter learning and school practice where valuing geographical containment, alternating attention management, and individualised practice.

Transitions

Crozier and Davies (2007), in mapping and analysing how families and schools interact, noted that the discourse surrounding poor families and Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage families in the UK positions families as the problem. In naming these families as "hard to reach," the school places responsibility with the families for generating shared goals and values between homes and schools. Crozier and Davies (2007) suggested that "rather than parents being 'hard to reach,' it is frequently the schools themselves that inhibit accessibility for certain parents" (p. 296). They suggested that there is "an implicit expectation for parents to 'prepare' their children for schooling" (p. 3001) and suggested that this preparation mirrors a belief that school readiness is about middle-class values and ways of being. They suggested that middle-class social reproduction is promulgated through a belief in a particular parenting style which prepares children for school success. They argued that these values

are transmitted through the press, through government written information; through parents' meetings and at the school gate, on the grapevine, between other parents: spaces uninhabited, or not visited, by most of our parents respondents. The school's implicit expectations are based on an, albeit subconscious, assumption that all parents are "like us": "like us" being white and middle class. (p. 300)

In our study, the perspectives of the protection worker, the class teacher, the extended family, and the speech pathologist were aligned around middle-class values of child development. The focus of attention and therefore responsibility for "fixing the problem" lay with the Peninsula family and not with the school. The school continued to validate its position through ongoing testing by specialists and the school's continued and genuine concern for Andrew's development against expected norms.

Goldman (2005) suggested that by schools naming children as "students" they symbolically position them within the "institutional life of the school as opposed to the life of the family" (pp. 1–2). Through this process, it legitimises and sanctions the colonisation of the family by the school, and as Crozier and Davies (2007) said, it puts all the responsibility on the family to learn the "schools way of doing things." In the Peninsula family case, the mother was working hard to support her child to be a successful learner at school by doing as "the school asked." The school was also working hard to help Andrew be a successful learner, but in ways that were very different to his home practices and traditions. Even though the school took ownership of "their students," they had no mechanism by which to learn about Andrew's sophisticated geographical roaming, his capacity to engage multipartner simultaneously, or his collective (rather than individualistic) orientation to being a learner. The social situation for Andrew's development was not understood and therefore could not be taken into account when making judgements about his approach to learning in the school. Consequently, a view of development as a naturally evolving process continued to be espoused when giving advice to the mother—both by the school and by the protection worker. Such a view of development was put forward as the "right and only way" of thinking about the development of the Peninsula family's children. When this perspective is adopted, teachers can only support assumed natural processes of development, such as sitting still for increasingly longer periods of time (based on particular expected norms related to age levels). The existing theoretical tools that are available in schooling institutions in Australia do not easily allow teachers to seek out a child's social situation of development, and as such, teachers are blind to the possibilities for different developmental trajectories. Teachers who conceptualise development as a natural evolving process can easily misread children's behaviours and ways of interacting with reality, as was evident in this study. The misreading of a child's activity may mean that it is difficult to notice how the child's social situation can change when a entering new practice traditions. Some children enter learning contexts in schools which are so far removed from their lived experience at home that it almost becomes impossible for a child to focus on curricula learning in school.

This study has drawn attention to the need for problematising the existing view of development as a naturally evolving process and to provide teachers with better theoretical tools for thinking about development. A cultural-historical perspective on development, which foregrounds the social situation of development (Vygotsky, 1998) within a dialectical framework of the child's perspective, the family's perspective and the schools perspective (Hedegaard, 2009), offers a genuine step forward.

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