

Intersectional Developmental Science

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In recent years, significant attention has been drawn to social inequalities in America, raising awareness of injustices against marginalized people and the need for social change. This call to action reached the developmental science field, whose focus on the human condition is positioned to actively contribute to such change (Matthews, Maslowsky, McBride Murry, & Schulenberg, 2014). While social justice is a core feature of developmental science (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006; Fisher, Busch-Rossnagel, Jopp, & Brown, 2012; Lerner, 2015) the recent call to action has intensified prior demands for researchers to recognize and understand unique lived experiences in order to produce more socially just research. The current statement proposes a conceptual and methodological shift to ultimately create intersectional developmental science (IDS) through the incorporation of intersectionality with a relational developmental science (RDS) approach.

RDS lends itself to enhancing socially just developmental work by recognizing the co-action between individuals and their environment to promote optimal development (Gottlieb, 2007; Overton, 2015). An RDS lens considers the influence of contextual differences and historical events on life course trajectories, making it a natural fit with intersectionality. Intersectionality can be traced to the 1800's in the writings of Ida B. Wells and Anna Julia Cooper (May, 2015), and emerged in activist, theoretical and empirical writings in the late 1960's within Black and feminist research in the United States (Beal, 1970; Crenshaw, 1989; King, 1988). Intersectionality is used to explain how socially constructed categories like gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, among others, "simultaneously affect the perceptions, experiences, and opportunities of everyone living in a society stratified along these dimensions" (Cole, 2009, p 179). Grounded in justice, its goal is to illustrate the interlocking oppressions

within unique social locations, or individual positions of power, based on the interrelationships of privilege and disadvantage associated with socially constructed groups (Andersen & Collins, 2013; Cole, 2009; Few-Demo, 2014). While Intersectionality allows researchers to examine the interconnected individual experiences which form the basis of identity, RDS allows researchers to capture the complexity of development. Creating Intersectional Developmental Science (IDS) extends the benefits of both Intersectionality and RDS perspectives, yielding knowledge that reflects relative plasticity through the intersectional influence of privileging or oppressive experiences in various contexts and settings across the lifespan.

To apply an IDS approach, we advocate conducting work in alignment with the following four key principles: 1) Understanding how power and oppression influence development over time, with a particular focus on identity development; 2) Acknowledging the dynamic, fluid, and temporal nature of development within systems of power; 3) Overtly advancing justice in research; and 4) Utilizing methods that capture individual developmental experiences during development across time. The first principle addresses issues such as how social identities intersect and whether design questions, demographic categorizations, and collection methods capture these intersections. The second principle addresses how context changes for individuals and whether the labels, descriptors, and inclusion criteria used in studies honors these changes. The third principle addresses researcher positionality as well the importance of labeling work as justice oriented. Finally, the last principle addresses the potential of creating new, reapplying existing, and/or combining methodologies to create multi-tiered and/or multiphased methodological approaches to better capture IDS concepts. These principles are meant to serve as a starting point in the process of promoting conceptual and applied shifts towards a more socially just developmental science field.

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