

Equity, Justice and Developmental Science in an Era of Vulnerability and Uncertainty

While the impact of sociopolitical climates on the developmental health and well-being of young people and families has been long been studied, the current global socio-political-historical context has brought into sharp focus the importance of understanding the ways that equity and justice relate to developmental pathways available to young people around the world. Issues related to the distribution of resources; access to health care, education, sustainable food and water sources; and climate change significantly impact the physical and psychological development of children and youth. In addition, migration across countries; increased economic polarization and racial and ethnic diversity within countries; intergroup conflict; and bias related to such factors as race, ethnicity, indigenous origins, disability status, religion, social class, sexual orientation, and gender diversity have profound implications for young peoples' social relationships and everyday experiences in families, schools, and communities.

As one of the largest, international organizations focused on the science of child development, the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) and its members are in a unique position to address the impact of the sociopolitical climates on children and adolescents' health and well-being, especially those from historically marginalized and vulnerable families and communities. This is particularly relevant to the work of SRCD's Equity and Justice (E&J) Committee whose charge is to promote the importance and legitimacy of and advance scientific scholarship on topics related to equity and justice in childhood and adolescence, and to foster the dissemination and implementation of findings that bear on programs and policies related to equity and justice. More information about our mission can be found at <http://equityandjustice.srcd.org/>.

As members of the E&J Committee, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to using rigorous scientific evidence to advance understanding of and promote the health and well-being of all children and adolescents, especially those marginalized by society due to their socioeconomic position, sexual or gender minority status, immigrant and documentation status, religious beliefs, ability status, and/or racial and ethnic background. Youth who hold marginalized identities have long faced mistreatment and systematic disadvantage in many communities and societies. Developmental science has an ethical responsibility to identify evidenced-based solutions to eliminate and mitigate the negative effects of sexism, misogyny, racism, classism, heterosexism, cis-sexism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, ableism (i.e., discrimination against persons with disabilities), and their intersection, on children's development.

At its best, science is a tool to advance society and to identify solutions to our biggest problems. Scientific discovery facilitates the understanding of contributors to inequality and helps to identify opportunities to intervene to foster a more just and equitable society for all. This is especially true within the context of sociopolitical climates that challenge the integrity of science and scientists. As a committee, we call on SRCD members to advocate for the continued privileging of scientific information over gut feelings and opinions. When the credibility of science is questioned in the public sphere there are demonstrable consequences. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) abruptly canceled two long-planned scientific conferences (one on Climate and Health, and one on LGBT Youth Health). These summits would have brought together nonpartisan health officials, practitioners, and researchers to discuss the public health issues that impact the daily lives and well-being of all children and adolescents. Sociopolitical climates have the potential to elevate and support, or constrain and restrict, developmental scientists' ability to engage in rigorous scientific inquiry and to train and mentor the next generation of scholars, educators, and practitioners. In the current sociopolitical climate, we acknowledge that specific areas of developmental science inquiry (e.g., the promotion of the health and well-being of marginalized groups) may be more susceptible to funding challenges. We stress the critical importance of maintaining funding support for scientific endeavors that seek to improve the well-being of children, youth, and families, particularly those who are most vulnerable and marginalized in society, during tumultuous, disruptive, and uncertain times.

In addition to affirming the importance of scientific inquiry to enhance and promote the well-being of children, youth, and families, we call on SRCD members to:

1. **Stress and emphasize core values** promoting the benefits of diversity and inclusivity in regards to youth, our membership, and broader society. Addressing social justice and equity related issues in developmental science motivated establishment of the E&J committee. We are committed to advancing scholarship on child development through a social justice lens. Accordingly, we pay explicit attention to the ways in which macro contexts (i.e., policies, societal attitudes and beliefs, laws and regulations) and micro contexts (i.e., families, schools and early child care settings, peers, neighborhoods and communities) intersect to facilitate or reduce equitable opportunities

for healthy development among *all* youth. We assert that ensuring equity and social justice for all children is a necessary condition for the overall mission of SRCD.

2. **Speak out about what is problematic** in sociopolitical climates. It is important to appropriately label biases (e.g., sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, cis-sexism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, ableism) that fuel and are fueled through policies or politics. Silence and apathy perpetuate violence to the body and spirit of us all. Many of us are in positions of power as researchers, educators, practitioners, and policy-makers; the language we use matters. We can model inclusive language, engage in brave conversations about difficult topics, and hold others accountable when their language use reflects bias. In essence, we can leverage our positions of power to lift up the voices and perspectives of marginalized groups, challenge societal biases, and create inclusive spaces for dialogue across difference.
3. **Express support and solidarity** when any groups of children and youth (and their families) are targeted (e.g., refugee and immigrant youth, youth of color, LGBTQ youth, Muslim youth), as well as with the developmental scientists who hold marginalized social identities and/or seek to advance equity and social justice through their teaching, research, and practice. SRCD can foster a broader sense of connection among developmental scientists. Regardless of the specific research agenda of any individual member, as a Society, we have a shared responsibility to support each other as we collectively work to improve the life circumstances and well-being of children and youth.
4. **Get involved.** Share your expertise. Be clear on the facts and confront distorted or false information. We must continue to show why research and expertise are relevant and necessary. In addition, we have an increasing responsibility to teach others how to be responsible consumers of research and news.
5. **Be intentional about self-care** as you remain engaged. Take time to check in with loved ones, friends, colleagues, and students. Create safe spaces to share, while respecting people's rights to craft their own reactions. Communities of support will sustain us over the long haul and allow us to stay revitalized and recharged as we engage in the very important business of scholarship for equity and justice.

As a committee, we will continue advocating for justice and equity for all children and their families through sound scientific methods, research, and scholarship. You will be hearing more from us in the coming weeks and months as we fulfill our own role within SRCD and our broader society.

In solidarity,

SRCD's Equity & Justice Committee: Rashmita Mistry (Committee Chair), Christia Spears Brown, Chelsea Derlan, Stacey Horn, Noelle Hurd, Martin Ruck, Stephen Russell, Russell Toomey, and Tiffany Yip

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Ms. Keira Leneman, Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota
Professor Vonnie C. McLoyd, University of Michigan

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Dr. William Arsenio, Yeshiva University
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Dr. Kathie Reid-Bevington Associate Dean and Professor of Child Development, California State University, Fresno
Shannon Stark Guss, Early Childhood Education Institute
Marites Pinon
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