



Roy, A. L. (2018). Intersectional ecologies: Positioning intersectionality in settings-level research. In C. E. Santos & R. B. Toomey (Eds.), *Envisioning the Integration of an Intersectional Lens in Developmental Science*. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 161, 57–74.

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Intersectional Ecologies: Positioning Intersectionality in Settings-Level Research

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Abstract

Developmental science has recognized the import of ecological theory and research in furthering understanding of development in context. However, despite the fact that ecological and intersectional theory share points of commonality, few researchers to date have attempted to integrate these perspectives. This manuscript addresses this gap and highlights three ways that an intersectional lens can advance settings-level research. With a focus on neighborhoods as settings of development, we (1) describe how intersectionality may manifest itself within neighborhoods, (2) discuss how intersectionality can inform our understanding of how individuals experience neighborhoods, and (3) detail strategies for conceptualizing and measuring intersectionality in neighborhood research. As such, the goal of this manuscript is to push thinking on the ways that intersectionality may inform and advance settings-level research in developmental science. © 2018 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

Introduction

Developmental scientists have long recognized the importance of considering development in context; conceptualizing development as a process that occurs via transactional relationships between individuals and the multiple settings in which they are embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Sameroff, 2009). Although ecological perspectives and settings-level research parallel intersectionality's attention to the role that systems play in shaping development, in general, settings-level research does not emphasize structural oppression and the ways that it shapes both the characteristics of, and how individuals experience, the settings in which development occurs. This paper aims to help bridge this gap by exploring the ways that an intersectional lens may advance an understanding of settings-level research and development in context. After a brief discussion of theory informing settings-level research, we discuss three ways that intersectionality may advance settings-level research. Focusing our discussion on neighborhoods as one setting of development, we (1) describe how intersectionality may manifest itself within neighborhoods, (2) discuss how intersectionality can inform our understanding of how individuals experience neighborhoods, and (3) detail strategies for conceptualizing and measuring intersectionality in neighborhood research.

Settings-Level Research and Intersectionality

Researchers examining settings-level influences on development often use Bronfenbrenner's (1974, 1974, 1976, 1977, 1979) ecological-systems theory as an overarching theoretical framework to support their work. Ecological-systems theory posits that development occurs through proximal processes, or the progressively more complex reciprocal interactions between an individual and the persons, objects, and symbols in their immediate environment. As such, an individual's environment, conceptualized as a set of nested structures moving from the most proximal to the most distal, is the context where development occurs. Within this framework, the microsystem is an individual's most-immediate environment where the individual directly interacts with physical, social, and symbolic features of the settings that they regularly come in contact with. These settings can include the family, peer groups, schools, and neighborhoods to name a few. The mesosystem reflects the linkages that occur between the settings with which the developing individual has contact; for example, the relationship between a child's parents and teachers. The mesosystem is embedded in the exosystem; the exosystem includes the points of contact between two or more settings, including at least one setting with which the developing individual does not have direct contact (e.g., a parent's workplace) but can indirectly shape development by affecting the processes within the immediate setting. The macrosystem refers to the overarching patterns of a culture or subculture

that shape and/or constrain behaviors within the micro-, meso-, and exosystems. Finally, the chronosystem reflects the passage of time and the changes or consistencies that exist in individuals and environments over time.

Intersectionality provides a framework for considering the meaning and consequences of multiple categories of social group membership (e.g., race, class, gender, sexual orientation) and how intersections between multiple systems of oppression and privilege may differentially shape individual experience and functioning. However, in our read of the literature, intersectionality has yet to explicitly integrate a developmental perspective. Like ecological-systems theory, intersectionality positions the individual within multiple, interlocking systems. However, while ecological-systems theory conceptualizes these systems as the settings and relationships that define an individual's immediate environment, an intersectional perspective positions the individual within multiple, interlocking systems of oppression. For example, an intersectional perspective may offer insight into the ways that intersecting stereotypes and expectations about race and gender may uniquely shape the ways that Black boys are perceived and treated in a classroom setting that is unique from experiences of boys of other races/ethnicities or Black girls but has serious implications for academic performance and development.

In addition, as the editors of this volume point out in the introductory manuscript, ecological-systems theory at times overlooks the role that structural oppression plays in shaping individual development. For example, although ecological-systems theory recognizes that individuals are embedded in different intersecting settings, it has paid less attention to the fact that social group membership (and the accompanying interlocking systems of oppression and affordances attached to group membership) can shape how individuals experience these settings. Moreover, although ecological-systems theory recognizes that settings and individual development are embedded within larger systems of culture (macrosystem) and time (chronosystem), ecological-systems theory fails to explicitly acknowledge the ways that interlocking systems of oppression and affordances are experienced within these systems. In sum, the theory fails to explicitly acknowledge issues of power, oppression, and privilege in how settings are experienced.

A common challenge experienced by scholars examining both settings-level influences and intersectionality is in the operationalization of systems. The intersectional framework was largely born out of writings that explored the intersections of oppressions that Black women experience while critiquing the exclusion of Black women from both Black and women's movements (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989). The intersectional framework has been extended to consider additional systems of oppression (e.g., classism, heterosexism, religious intolerance) that collectively work to shape individuals' lived experiences. As conceptualizations of interlocking systems of oppression have become more complex, so has become the challenge of

operationalizing and measuring these unique experiences. Similarly, settings-level researchers often struggle to operationalize and measure the multiple, interconnected settings in which development occurs. As such, although settings-level researchers often cite ecological-systems theory as evidence for the need to examine contextual influences on development, the majority of empirical work in this area tends to focus on a singular setting (e.g., family, school, neighborhood).

Building on the commonalities (and distinctions) discussed before, in the following sections of this paper, we discuss three ways that an intersectional lens may advance settings-level thinking and research. Although we primarily focus our discussion on neighborhoods as one setting of development, the points raised in the following sections could easily be applied to and inform research on multiple types of settings (e.g., schools, workplaces).

Neighborhoods as Settings of Development

Before beginning our discussion on integrating intersectionality into settings-level research, we provide a brief overview of theory and research more explicitly focused on neighborhoods as settings of development. Perhaps one of the most-referenced theories in neighborhood research is social disorganization theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942) which is commonly used as a framework for explaining crime, delinquency, and other problem behaviors encountered in poor, urban neighborhoods (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Sampson & Morenoff, 1997). The theory argues that neighborhood structural factors such as poverty, racial/ethnic heterogeneity, and residential instability lead to the breakdown of neighborhood organization, including both formal and informal institutions, resulting in a community's inability to maintain public order and realize its common values (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Sampson & Morenoff, 1997). With the breakdown of public order, residents are less able to exact control over, for example, adolescents, resulting in higher rates of high risk and delinquent behaviors that continue to spread throughout the community as these behaviors become the norm (Jencks & Meyer, 1990; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000).

In a parallel and somewhat contradictory body of work, research on racial residential segregation posits that segregation is a fundamental cause of racial disparities in health, particularly for Black Americans (Williams & Collins, 2001). In contrast with social disorganization theory, which argues that neighborhood racial/ethnic heterogeneity is a precursor to the breakdown of neighborhood organization, research on racial segregation highlights the fact that predominately Black (i.e., racially homogenous) neighborhoods tend to be characterized by concentrated poverty, which in turn, negatively influences health (Massey & Denton, 1993). The majority of research on racial residential segregation has focused on the separation of Blacks from Whites, in part because Blacks remain severely segregated

from Whites in the majority of U.S. cities and at much higher rates than for Latinos and Asians (Charles, 2003). Racial segregation results in the concentration of Blacks in high-poverty neighborhoods. Concentrated poverty produces neighborhoods that are physically deteriorated and have high rates of crime, poor-quality schools, and excess mortality rates. While most low-income White people live near non low-income people, most low-income Black people live near other low-income people (Massey & Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1987). This concentration of disadvantage is further perpetuated by the fact that individuals in high-poverty areas lack access to educational and economic opportunities. Moreover, Black children who grow up in poor neighborhoods are more likely than White children who grow up in poor neighborhoods to remain in poor neighborhoods into adulthood (Sharkey, 2008). As a result, racially segregated neighborhoods and cities produce and maintain racial disparities in SES, which in turn promote disparities in health outcomes.

There is a robust body of research linking the neighborhood characteristics detailed in the theories of social disorganization and racial segregation with various aspects of development (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). For example, empirical research has consistently linked exposure to neighborhood poverty and crime with higher rates of adolescent internalizing (Aneshensel & Sucoff, 1996; Fowler, Tompsett, Braciszewski, Jacques-Tiura, & Baltes, 2009; Guerra, Rowell Huesmann, & Spindler, 2003) and externalizing problems (Bottoms, 2006; Fowler et al., 2009). Exposure to poverty and crime is also related to increases in risk-taking behavior such as early sexual initiation (Cubbin, Santelli, Brindis, & Braveman, 2005), smoking (Lee & Cubbin, 2002; Roux, Merkin, Hannan, Jacobs, & Kiefe, 2003), and substance use (Tucker, Pollard, de la Haye, Kennedy, & Green, 2013). In addition, Black children and youth living in racially segregated neighborhoods have been shown to have lower verbal skills (Bennett, 2011), lower ethnic-racial identity (Oyserman & Yoon, 2009), and to engage in more risky sexual behavior (Lutfi, Trepka, Fennie, Ibanez, & Gladwin, 2015) compared to Black children living in more integrated neighborhoods. In general, the positive relationship between having high SES neighbors and children and youths' school readiness and academic outcomes is one of the most consistent and robust in the neighborhood and development literature (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Interestingly, these perspectives attempt to address issues of power and privilege more explicitly than ecological perspectives, but fail to acknowledge the intersecting ways in which multiple forms and systems of power, oppression, and privilege intersect.

Integrating Intersectionality Into Settings-Level Research

As highlighted before, an intersectional lens brings attention to the *multiple, intersecting systems of oppression that perpetuate inequities and affordances*

(e.g., Crenshaw, 1989) and subsequently shape individuals' lives. The integration of two systems-level perspectives is inherently complex, bridging multiple systems of oppression (e.g., racism, classism, sexism) and settings (e.g., family, school, neighborhood) that are intertwined in numerous ways. Although it is impossible to describe all of the ways that these two perspectives are related and may inform each other, in the following sections, we describe three ways that an intersectional lens can advance understanding of settings-level influences on development. Using neighborhood as an example of one type of setting, we (1) describe how intersectionality may manifest itself within neighborhoods, (2) discuss how intersectionality can inform our understanding of how individuals experience neighborhoods, and (3) detail strategies for conceptualizing and measuring intersectionality in neighborhood research.

Neighborhoods as Settings of Intersectionality

Neighborhood Identity. Just as individuals can experience multiple categories of identity, difference, and disadvantage (Cole, 2009), so can neighborhoods, particularly urban neighborhoods. There are numerous examples of neighborhood space that has come to be identified by the characteristics (real or perceived) of the people who live there. There are neighborhoods defined by residents in terms of sexuality (e.g., San Francisco's Castro as an epicenter of queer life), race/ethnicity (e.g., New York City's Washington Heights as a center of Dominican American and Dominican immigrant life), immigrant status (e.g., New York City's Chinatown as a hub for recent immigrants from China and Asia), and social class (e.g., Chicago's Englewood characterized by high rates of poverty). In addition, some neighborhoods have "intersecting identities," characterized by multiple overlapping social categories. One example is Chicago's Boystown whose name alone highlights the intersection of gender (men) and sexuality (gay/bisexual) in a neighborhood space. In addition, because of the long history of racial residential segregation in the United States, racial/ethnic makeup and social class are often confounded, with the highest levels of urban poverty being concentrated in predominantly racial/ethnic minority communities (Massey & Denton, 1993).

The social category memberships held by different neighborhoods are not solely experienced as the interactions with the people that occupy a place. For example, a resident of New York City's Washington Heights, a neighborhood characterized by its large proportion of residents born in or descended from the Dominican Republic, is likely to come in contact with a large number of people who are of Dominican descent. However, it is not these interactions alone that create a neighborhood's identity. Washington Heights' "Dominican identity" is reflected in the types of restaurants that line its streets, the food that can be bought in its stores, the types of resources available to its residents, and the languages spoken on its streets. In

addition to the physical reality of a place, neighborhood identities can also be influenced by how neighborhoods and/or the types of people who live there are represented and/or perceived in the broader society and shaped by the social, economic, and historical circumstances that have shaped settlement and the development of place, sociohistorical circumstances that are closely tied to overlapping systems of power and privilege. Thus, by definition, neighborhoods are places that bring to life intersectionality's emphasis on overlapping systems of oppression and affordances, particularly in settings where communities of individuals marginalized for a variety of factors are concentrated (e.g., racial/ethnic minority, low income, immigrant).

Stereotypes of Place. Just as neighborhood space can have an identity, so too can people hold stereotypes about neighborhood space that are directly tied to the characteristics (racial/ethnic composition being the most commonly examined) of the people that live there. For example, the stereotypes that people hold about Black neighborhoods tend to be overwhelmingly negative (e.g., impoverished, crime-ridden, ghetto, run-down) (Bonam, Bergsieker, & Eberhardt, 2016). In addition, individuals' implicit biases about race and class can shape the way that they perceive neighborhood space; individuals' perceived risk of criminal victimization is higher when they live in neighborhoods with a percentage of young African-American men regardless of actual neighborhood crime rates (Quillian & Pager, 2001; 2010). Similarly, residents' perceptions of neighborhood social disorder (e.g., graffiti, public intoxication, garbage, abandoned cars) are powerfully shaped by the racial and economic context of the neighborhoods they live in. Although Whites are more likely to perceive social disorder than African Americans, individuals of all races living in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of racial/ethnic minority groups and poverty are more likely to perceive indicators of social disorder regardless of their actual presence (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004). As such, the intersecting systems of oppression that have powerfully equated race and class, shape the ways that individuals perceive space.

The tendency for individuals to hold space-focused stereotypes and exhibit implicit biases about neighborhood space has powerful implications for the perpetuation of structural inequality and racial segregation (Charles, 2003). Not only can these biases affect how individuals perceive their neighborhoods and the neighborhoods of others, but they can also influence the value of neighborhood space and the extent to which individuals are willing to invest in and protect neighborhood space. Recent experimental work has found that individuals evaluate homes as having a lower value when they believe the owners to be Black (vs. White) and that this relationship is explained by the activation of space-focused stereotypes of the surrounding neighborhood and a disconnection from the neighborhood (Bonam et al., 2016). Bonam et al. (2016) go on to further demonstrate that White Americans are more willing to devalue Black space, relative to White space,

by expressing less opposition to the construction of a chemical plant in predominantly Black neighborhoods. Space-focused stereotypes and implicit biases associated with the racial and economic characteristics can shape how individuals “see” neighborhood space and subsequently affect decisions about residing and/or investing in specific neighborhoods. Moreover, as Whites are “primed” to see disorder, they may be more likely to disinvest or move out of predominantly Black or racially mixed areas thereby creating a self-fulfilling structural prophecy that contributes to the consistent racial segregation and structural inequality that exists in the United States (Charles, 2003; Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004). Positioned within an intersectional perspective, these findings highlight the powerful ways that space-focused stereotypes and biases are driven by and serve to perpetuate interlocking systems of oppression.

Sociohistorical Context of Neighborhood Development. In reflecting on the intersecting identities of neighborhood space, it is also essential to examine the historical systems of oppression and privilege that have shaped neighborhood space and identity. Consider, for example, the emergence of the “gay neighborhood” in the United States. D’Emilio and Freedman (1988) describe World War II as a “nationwide ‘coming out’ experience” that was characterized by an increase in the perceptible presence of gays and lesbians in many of the United States’ urban centers. During this time, military officials discharged thousands of gays and lesbians from the armed services based on presumptions of homosexuality. These dishonorably discharged service members returned to military bases in several U.S. cities (e.g., San Francisco, New York City, Chicago) and created spaces of concentration in these urban locales out of self-protection (Ghaziani, 2014). The visible presence of gays and lesbians in these neighborhoods prompted the opening of bars catering to this specific population, which in turn, fostered dense social networks and encouraged gays and lesbians to assert a right to gather in public places. Therefore, the emergence of the early American gay neighborhood is closely tied to the development of the gay community as a social movement (Castells, 1983).

For many sexual minority individuals, “gay neighborhoods” continue to serve as spaces of safety and freedom today; places where one can live and love without judgement. However, examining this history through an intersectional lens also forces us to consider whose voices are not present in this narrative. The early gay neighborhoods were predominantly White, and African-American men and women were denied access to many of their establishments (Ghaziani, 2014). Many gay neighborhoods remain predominantly White today (with few exceptions), in some cases rejecting the integration of racial/ethnic minority others (Daniel-McCarter, 2012). Yet, ironically, the Stonewall riots which are considered a turning point in the gay rights movement in the 1970s, was led by queer/trans women of color in New York City (Cohen, 2007). Thus, despite the emergence and visibility of predominantly White “gay communities” throughout the United States,

which itself can be viewed as a form of social movement, queer and trans individuals of color played a pivotal role in shaping queer movements and social activism. Perhaps a lesser known narrative that intersectionality can help bring to life is that individuals who live at the intersections of multiple forms of marginalization are sometimes at the forefront of movements that aim to challenge the status quo (Santos & VanDaalen, 2018).

Compare the emergence of the gay neighborhood with the history of Black neighborhoods in the United States. Denying Black Americans access to physical space has a long history in the United States that infiltrated all aspects of life during the Jim Crow era and de jure segregation (O'Brien, 2012; Woodward, 2002). The legally sanctioned relegating of Black Americans to lower-quality prescribed space ultimately put in motion the patterns of residential racial segregation that persist today (Massey & Denton, 1993). Intersecting systems of oppression served to perpetuate the intertwining of race and class in America's urban neighborhoods. Racial segregation results in the concentration of Black Americans in high-poverty neighborhoods that are physically deteriorated and have high rates of crime, poor-quality schools, and excess mortality rates. Because Black children who grow up in poor neighborhoods are more likely than White children who grow up in poor neighborhoods to remain in poor neighborhoods into adulthood, this system of oppression is passed from one generation to the next (Sharkey, 2008).

Comparing these two histories, it is apparent the role that power and privilege play in the emergence of these neighborhood "types" and the role that these neighborhood spaces play in residents lives. The emergence of both was in part motivated by laws and policies that excluded and marginalized individuals based on race and sexuality. However, the growing visible concentration of gays and lesbians in urban spaces was accompanied by the emergence of bars specifically catering to them, a development that further promoted the concentration and organization of gay and lesbian social networks (Ghaziani, 2014). This investment in gay space highlights how sexually marginalized residents were able to capitalize on other sources of privilege (e.g., race and class) to develop neighborhood space. These early investments served to foster economic growth that in turn helped shape perceptions of gay neighborhoods as locations of safety and acceptance. In contrast, the emergence of Black neighborhoods, specifically poor, Black neighborhoods, has been closely linked with neighborhood disinvestment and illegal housing practices that have served to confine Black Americans to undesirable neighborhood space (Massey & Denton, 1993). While aspects of privilege have served to largely make gay neighborhood space well-resourced and desirable, intersecting systems of inequality continue to divert resources from Black neighborhoods and make upward mobility difficult for many Black Americans.

Multiple, intersecting systems of oppression and privilege are also reflected in patterns of neighborhood stability and change. In recent years,

there has been increased attention to the possible demise of the gay neighborhood citing evidence that traditional gay neighborhoods are “deconcentrating” and becoming less “segregated” (Ghaziani, 2014). One argument for this demographic shift is that political gains and societal acceptance are making the safety and shared identity of the gay neighborhood less essential and opening a greater set of residential options to gays and lesbians (Ghaziani, 2014). In addition to the well-deserved and hard-earned shifts in policy and societal perceptions that may be shaping modern changes in the structure of gay neighborhoods, it also important to consider the role that power and privilege play in motivating these changes as well. A lack of discriminatory and economic barriers in housing selection makes residential selection for White, middle-class gays, and lesbians a matter of choice rather than something that is imposed. Take, in comparison, the example of Black, middle-class neighborhoods. Because of residential segregation, Black middle-class neighborhoods tend to have more crime and be geographically surrounded by poor communities than similarly resourced White neighborhoods (Patillo-McCoy, 1999). In addition, because of redlining practices in mortgage lending, middle-class Black families have less than half the net worth of White families with comparable incomes (Cole, 2009; Conley, 1999). As such, even the additional opportunity afforded through economic resources is undercut via the intersecting systems of oppression that affect Black Americans.

Intersectionality in Individual Experiences of Neighborhoods

Not only can an intersectional lens inform our understanding of neighborhoods as settings of development, it can also bring to light the role that intersecting systems of oppression play in shaping how individuals differentially experience neighborhood space. Many scientists have taken the position that objective “truth” does not exist, arguing instead that knowledge is situated and contextual (e.g., Tebes, 2005). Individual experiences, characteristics, and society’s reactions to these characteristics shape the way individuals perceive the world.

Perceptions of Space. Some researchers have highlighted the importance of considering both the objective and subjective features of settings (Gallimore, Goldenberg, & Weisner, 1993; O’Donnell & Tharp, 2011). Gallimore et al. (1993) describe how a behavior gets its meaning from the both the objective reality of the activity and the social construction that the individual assigns to the behavior or task. Moreover, that ways in which individuals make meaning of behavior and environment is largely shaped by their cultural community and the intersecting systems of oppression in which they are embedded (O’Donnell & Tharp, 2011; Wesiner, 2002).

Neighborhood research has begun to explore the role that individual perceptions and agency play in shaping neighborhood effects. Work in this area has found that neighborhood structural characteristics such as poverty,

racial/ethnic composition, and crime are related to adolescents' perceptions of disorder, cohesion, and safety (Chung & Steinburg, 2006; Plunkett, Abarca-Mortensen, Behnke, & Sands, 2007). Moreover, youths' perceptions of neighborhood safety shape the strategies they employ for avoiding and coping with risk (Rasmussen, Aber, & Bhana, 2004). However, residents who live in poor or high-crime neighborhoods do not always perceive their neighborhoods as disadvantaged or unsafe (Drakulich, 2013), raising questions as to how residents make meaning from neighborhood characteristics and how intersecting systems of oppression may affect this process.

The lived experience of navigating multiple systems of oppression can shape the way individuals attend to and interpret environmental cues. Theories of neighborhood disorder (Wilson & Kelling, 1982) posit that indicators of physical (e.g., graffiti, garbage) and social (e.g., public alcohol consumption) disorder provide powerful cues as to the organization and safety of neighborhood space. However, the salience of these cues is most likely determined by an individual's exposure to and familiarity with them. Youth who grow up in, attend school in, and socialize in neighborhoods with high levels of disorder may be less likely to take notice of and make meaning from these specific characteristics of neighborhood space. Moreover, how youth interpret elements of neighborhood space is likely to be driven by their prior experiences in and expectations for space. For example, for some the presence of police in a neighborhood may elicit feelings of safety and order. However, given the histories of racial profiling and racialized policing practices, a police presence may be linked to feelings of threat and danger for youth of color (particularly boys). That said, this may be one aspect in which psychological research on individual perceptions of space can inform intersectionality's application to psychological phenomenon. Namely, that while overlapping systems of oppression as a level of analysis is important, so is whether or how individuals perceive or experience these systems. In other words, the integration of these perspectives pushes us to consider a systems-level perspective of intersectionality with the psychological perspective of individual perceptions of space.

Differential Experiences of Space. Not only do intersecting systems of oppression shape the way individuals perceive neighborhood space, they also affect the types of experiences that individuals have in neighborhood spaces. Perhaps the most rigorous examination of neighborhood effects on adolescent behavior problems and risk-taking behavior comes from *Moving to Opportunity*, a program that randomly assigned housing vouchers to predominantly Black families in order to enable moves from high poverty to lower-poverty neighborhoods. The short-term results were surprising: the beneficial effects of voucher receipt on lowering adolescent girls' internalizing problems and risky behavior were offset by detrimental effects on risk taking for boys (Kling, Liebman, & Katz, 2007). Findings from qualitative

interviews with participating youth revealed that variations in where youth spent their time, the strategies they used for navigating high-risk neighborhoods and the types of interactions that they had with peers may have been responsible for the unexpected program impacts and gender differences (Clampet-Lundquist, Edin, Kling, & Duncan, 2011). Boys were more likely to travel back to their original neighborhoods and peer networks, in part because of neighbors' complaints and the increased police surveillance Black boys experienced when "hanging out" in lower-poverty neighborhoods. In contrast, Black girls were more likely to spend time and develop new peer networks in lower-poverty neighborhoods, appreciating the "quietness" of the streets and the absence of the sexual harassment that had been common in their previous neighborhoods (Clampet-Lundquist et al., 2011). Examined through an intersectional lens, boys and girls differential experiences of neighborhood space is closely tied to intersecting systems of oppression related to race, gender, and class; for Black boys assumptions of criminality might make the occupation of middle-class neighborhood space feel threatening, but for girls it might provide a haven against the sexual objectification experienced on the crowded streets of lower-income neighborhoods.

Intersections between oppression and privilege can also be seen in arguments over who has access to and "belongs" in neighborhood space. As described previously, gay neighborhoods have long served as locations of freedom and safety for residents and visitors alike. However, hierarchies of power and privilege also play out in who is welcome in "gay space" and subsequently how individuals experience "gay space." One neighborhood where this tension has played out is in Chicago's Boystown, a historically gay (predominantly White, male, middle-class) neighborhood. Boystown's identity is expressed in various ways including the hosting of the city's annual Gay Pride Parade and the presence of twenty-two, 23-foot high, rainbow-ringed metal pylons that line the neighborhood's main thoroughfare. Boystown is also home to The Center on Halstead, a LGBTQ community center and shelter for LGBTQ youth. Many LGBTQ youth of color come to Boystown, and the services it provides, as a haven; activists argue that this space is safer for queer youth of color than their south- and west-side communities (Worley, 2011). Despite this, queer youth of color often feel unwelcome in the Boystown neighborhood. For example, following spikes in violence that occurred after the 2011 Chicago Pride Parade, residents of Boystown created a facebook page called "Take Back Boystown" that decried the presence of queer youth of color using racialized language such as "gangs," "thugs," and "hoodlums" and called for the shutdown of The Center on Halstead as it attracted violent "outsiders" (Daniel-McCarter, 2012). This example clearly exhibits the influence that intersecting systems of oppression and privilege play in determining who has access to otherwise "safe" neighborhood spaces.

Conceptualizing and Measuring Intersectionality in Neighborhood Research

Theory and research on neighborhood effects on individual functioning tends to recognize that neighborhood characteristics are multifaceted and interrelated. Social disorganization theory highlights the interplay between neighborhood structural factors such as poverty, racial/ethnic heterogeneity, and residential instability and the role they play in the breakdown of neighborhood organization and social order (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Sampson & Morenoff, 1997). Similarly, writings on racial residential segregation explicitly link neighborhood racial/ethnic composition and poverty, acknowledging the intersecting systems of oppression which have powerfully shaped neighborhood space (Williams & Collins, 2001).

Empirical research on neighborhoods tends to address these complexities by creating a composite of neighborhood characteristics or by including multiple neighborhood characteristics in models predicting individual outcomes. The problem with these approaches is that they fail to consider the unique and intersecting influences of multiple neighborhood characteristics. For example, the experience of living in a poor, predominantly Black neighborhood may be very different than living in a middle class predominantly Black neighborhood. Although the neighborhood-effects literature has largely ignored this complexity, some work has considered the joint influence of neighborhood race and class on individual outcomes (Roy, Hughes, & Yoshikawa, 2013; Roy, Hughes, & Yoshikawa, 2012). For example, Roy et al. (2012) found that while residence in predominately Black neighborhoods was detrimental for Black adults' health when neighborhood income was low, it was protective when neighborhood income was high. Others have used analytic strategies such as latent class analysis to identify neighborhoods characterized by differing characteristics in an effort to disentangle specific aspects of privilege and oppression (e.g., Abner, 2014). Although it is important to acknowledge that these types of analysis fail to capture salient aspects of power and privilege integral to an intersectional lens, they do provide additional insight into the complex ways that neighborhood characteristics, associated with and driven by systems of power and privilege, influence individual development.

There are several strategies that researchers might employ to better capture intersectionality in quantitative neighborhood research. First, more attention should be paid to neighborhood-level measures of discrimination and oppression. Although neighborhood characteristics (e.g., racial/ethnic composition, poverty) are commonly examined as predictors of individual experiences of discrimination, experiences of discrimination are rarely examined at the neighborhood level. Neighborhoods where the majority of residents share similar experiences may provide important insight into systems of oppression that are at play in different types of neighborhood space. Second, researchers should consider points of discrepancy between

“objective” and subjective neighborhood characteristics. For example, examining residents’ perceptions of safety and satisfaction with services in neighborhoods with a high versus low presence of objective indicators of police presence, crime, and organizational resources may illuminate disparities in how residents perceive and interact with neighborhood space. Finally, between-neighborhood examinations of how investments are made and the types of resources that are available in neighborhoods, can highlight the ways that intersecting systems of oppression serve to sustain or ignore different types of neighborhood space.

As previously argued, qualitative methods are essential in intersectionality theory and research (Syed, 2010). There are numerous examples of powerful neighborhood ethnographies that serve to highlight the intersecting systems of oppression and privilege that shape neighborhood space and the lives of their residents and visitors (e.g., Ghaziani, 2014; Patillo-McCoy, 1999; Wilson & Taub, 2007). As neighborhood, and settings-level researchers in general, increasingly recognize the importance of using an intersectional lens to understand individual development, qualitative and mixed-methods analysis will offer important tools in our scholarship. However, in order to better understand the ways that the intersecting systems of oppression and privilege manifest within neighborhood settings, it will also be important to examine similarities and differences that exist across neighborhood space (Syed, 2010; Yoshikawa, Weisner, Kalil, & Way, 2008). In-depth qualitative examinations comparing neighborhood spaces and the commonalities and differences that exist between them will provide a powerful strategy for bringing to light the intersecting systems of oppression and privilege at play both within and between neighborhoods.

Conclusions

The majority of this manuscript has been dedicated to positioning neighborhood-level research within an intersectionality framework. In addition to advancing our understanding of child and adolescent development in context, this perspective may offer insight into the persistence of social inequalities in health and education and inform how social justice activities might be leveraged to address these disparities. However, it is also important to highlight the fact that intersectionality is relevant for many types of settings-level research, not just neighborhoods alone. The themes and ideas presented here, specifically, (1) the manifestation of intersectionality within neighborhoods, (2) intersectionality in individuals’ experiences of neighborhoods, and (3) conceptualizing and measuring intersectionality in neighborhood research can easily be extended to inform research targeting other settings including schools, workplaces, and the juvenile justice system, to name a few. We encourage settings-level researchers of all kinds to apply and extend the ideas presented here to other settings of

development. Moreover, we wish to highlight the fact that although this discussion focuses on one specific setting, as most settings-level research tends to do, intersecting systems of oppression and privilege exist and operate across all intersecting settings in which development occurs. For example, systems of oppression and privilege related to gender, race, and class simultaneously shape family dynamics, neighborhood choice and experience, and school access and quality; all of which serve to further support and sustain existing systems of oppression and privilege. As such, the integration of ecological-systems theory, settings-level research, and intersectionality offers a powerful frame for understanding development in terms of overlapping systems of oppression and affordances across contexts.

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