

Developmental science research sheds new light on the origins of discrimination, social exclusion

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Experiencing prejudice and discrimination in childhood can have long term consequences, including depression, poor academic performance and negative health outcomes.

A new special section, published by the Society for Research in Child Development in the journal *Child Development*, titled "Discrimination, Social Exclusion, and Intergroup Attitudes: Equity and Justice in Developmental Science" highlights cutting edge research in developmental science regarding the origins and development of equity and justice. The special section discusses why equity and justice is central to the [developmental science](#) discipline and how it can inform policy and practice aimed at challenging inequality as well as mitigating the adverse experiences of marginalized people.

This special section, edited by Dr. Melanie Killen, Dr. Adam Rutland, and Dr. Tiffany Yip, begins with an affirmation that "the fair and equitable treatment of individuals has been a core value of humanity..." and an overview of previous research on children's development in light of this set of issues. It goes on to present novel research findings on children's experiences of discrimination, how discrimination impacts development, discrimination in schools and neighborhoods, and suggestions for future research directions for a variety of disciplines, including cognitive neuroscience and behavioral economics.

Highlights of the many new findings reported in the papers in the special section include that:

- As they age adolescents judge race-based humor as more acceptable.
- Children as young as 4 and 5 associate race with wealth status but also rectify social inequalities
- Social exclusion activates the same brain regions as experiencing physical pain or harm.
- Discrimination in middle school impacts developmental outcomes 2 years later

More information: Melanie Killen et al, Equity and Justice in Developmental Science: Discrimination, Social Exclusion, and Intergroup Attitudes, *Child Development* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/cdev.12593](https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12593)

Provided by Society for Research in Child Development

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