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Intersectionality Theory, Children’s Agency, and Rebellion Against Parents: Perspectives of Racial Minorities

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Abstract
Children’s agency is inhibited not solely by age, but by other areas of privilege and marginalization which work together to shape children’s trajectories (Choo & Feree, 2010). Intersectionality theory provides an effective framework to conceptualize these nuances. This study draws upon a larger study of children’s agency and childhood rebellion against parents composed of a demographically diverse sample of 61 participants. Participants were adults that either rebelled or wanted to rebel against parents before age eighteen. Intersectionality theory is concerned with understanding the ways in which individuals’ social advantages and disadvantages are shaped by multiple axes of social division which work together and influence one another (Collins & Bilge, 2016). With this in mind, this study attempts to illustrate how multiple social categories interrelate in participants’ stories about childhood rebellion. The participants were asked to connect their rebellions to eight different social categories race/ethnicity, education, income, age, sex/gender, sexual orientation, religion, and nationality. There are multiple approaches to intersectionality analysis (Misra 2018). Taking an intracategorical approach I have narrowed my sample (diverse across all eight categories) to include only racial/ethnic minorities who were native born in the United States. Taking an intercategorical approach I have analyzed participants’ rebellion experiences across all eight social categories. Preliminary findings demonstrate that the social categories of education and income contributed to perceptions of rising agency while race inhibited childhood agency during the rebellion period. Although participants were not asked to explicitly relate the social categories to each other, the interrelatedness of these social categories became apparent through their interviews.

Methods and Sample
- Subsample of 15, U.S. born, racial minorities.
- Participants categorize their race/ethnicity as African American, Latinx, Asian American, or American Indian. (3 multiracial with European American)
- Diverse across other 7 categories (nationality, income, education, religion, sex/gender, sexual orientation, and age)
- Asked to complete an intersectionality map in addition to interview.

Findings and Discussion
- Age, education, and income enhancing agency:
  - Offer opportunities exit home environment.
- Race inhibiting agency:
  - Societal barriers in place prevent racial minorities in the sample from achieving full agency.
- Race and Gender operate together:
  - Cultural imperatives for harsher rules and increased responsibilities within the home.
- Clustering of Social Categories:
  - Different areas of privilege and marginalization operate simultaneously.
- Immediacy of Social Categories:
  - While multiple social categories are relevant, some are more immediately salient in childhood.
- Not Recognizing Areas of Privilege:
  - Rarely were categories of privilege seen worthy of mapping.
  - Typically categories were only seen as relevant when participants were deprived in that area.

What is “intersectionality” anyway?
“A way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self […] are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division […] but by many axes that work together and influence each other.” (Collins & Bilge, 2016)

References