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Member Spotlight: Amy K. Marks, Ph.D.

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What interested you in becoming a developmental scientist?

I have always been very curious - since I was a child - about the ways humans grow, develop, and interact with the world and one another. I also noticed and experienced very early on in my life that there were inequities in our world, and much harm and injustice enacted between people and communities. As a young adult, I learned I could combine these scientific curiosities and my personal, social-justice lens in the field of developmental psychology. I was led to the work by the amazing mentors who came before me in the field; they showed me a way to push both myself and the dominant views of the field.

What does SRCD mean to you?

I'll never forget my first meeting. It was the spring before I started graduate school. I watched my soon-to-be mentor, Dr. Cynthia Garcia Coll, give a powerful lecture on deficit models in the study of BIPOC children, and I was in awe. Every word she spoke resonated with me as a truth. I found a home with her right then, and then later with several other future mentors and colleagues, through gatherings with the Millenium Scholars Program and the Latinx Caucus. SRCD gave me a way to connect with researchers, educators, and practitioners who cared about the same questions, issues, and challenges that I did.

What does the SRCD Caucuses mean to you?

I have been a member of the Latinx Caucus for many years now; it has been a central part of the joy I experience when I attend meetings, and a place for me to meet researchers whose work I aspire to emulate. So many members share similar indigenous perspectives and experiences with me. More recently, I have also joined the Black, Asian, and SOGIE Caucuses. All of the work I do is oriented around identity and social justice; these Caucuses as a whole provide me with critical perspectives, dialogue, comradery, and support for me and my students. I am grateful to all of the Caucuses for the work they are doing, and hope everyone joins up in solidarity with these wonderful groups.

Do you have a mentor or mentors who have been instrumental to your career and, if so, whom and how?

I can't tell my narrative without them, as you can see above. In addition to Dr. Garcia Coll, who remains a dear mentor and friend to this day, I am indebted to the care of Dr. Carola Suarez-Orozco for her many hours of advice, incredible writing skills, and just being in partnership with me on the journey. Dr. Ron Seifer was also a key mentor to me as a graduate student, encouraging my work as a researcher. And many years ago now, Drs. Lynne Huffman and Christine Blasey Ford gave me the care, guidance, and support I needed to realize I could and should go back to school to get a Ph.D.

What words of wisdom might you pass on to someone on their very first day after deciding to get a Ph.D. in developmental science or related?

Find your people! Don't be afraid to approach someone whose work you admire, and form connections. Your future mentors not only have time for you (though you may imagine they do not), they want and need your

partnership, perspective, and energy to see the important work we all do thrive.

What's your favorite aspect of SRCD membership?

All of the above - the opportunities for connection and for organizing to make a more just world.

Who inspires you?

I'm called to this work by the stories and voices of the community members I learn from, by my ancestors' joys and struggles, and am sustained by my family and daughters - the next generation. My students in the Youth Development in Context Lab inspire me every day with their spirit, bravery, care, brilliance, and stamina.

What is a typical day like for you?

The first word I think of is 'busy.' Then I pause, and feel the beauty of this. It is a gift and privilege to be able and busy with being a mother, partner, community member, Professor, healer...

What is something you learned in the last month?

I have learned so much in the past month. This past July, I began a yearlong leave of absence from my professorship, and this past month joined the Harvard Divinity School as their Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Fellow. This is a program for mid-career folks from underrepresented backgrounds to explore new roles in academia. My newest mentor, Dean Melissa Bartholomew, PhD, has already taught me volumes about integrating indigenous restorative justice practices into academic spaces. Her vision for broader racial justice through indigenous healing resonates with me so deeply. Again, I find myself in awe and filled with the deepest gratitude for a new community of mentors who grace my life and present me with opportunities to learn and live with deep intention and purpose.