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Member Spotlight: Kay Simon

(They/Them) Assistant Professor, Department of Family Social Science, University of Minnesota; SRCD SOGIE Caucus Member, SRCD Student and Early Career Council (SECC) Member

AUTHOR

Kay Simon

Assistant Professor
Department of Family Social Science,
University of Minnesota
https://twitter.com/DrKaySimon
Faculty Page

Why did you decide to choose Developmental Science as a course of study or career?

I have always been fascinated by the ways in which we develop stories to understand our lives and how we share them with others, especially around identity-based socialization. There are very few other relationships that impact and shape us more than our families, chosen or otherwise, so an investment in understanding families and by extension development was a natural next step following my undergraduate career.

Who or what inspirers you and why (and/or who/what inspired you to go into your chosen field of study)?

As a transgender/nonbinary person of color, I always felt isolated and alone growing up in the Southern U.S. so much of my life has been devoted to improving the lives of queer youth who will come after me, while also authentically carrying the stories of the activists who came before me. These activists include my own mentors and senior scholars in the field but also all of the LGBTQ+ people who have shaped our culture and history in a way that I aspire to do.

Is there a mentor or mentors who have been instrumental to your career and, if so, who and how?

No one has shaped my career and uplifted me more than my Ph.D. advisor, Dr. Rachel Farr - the impact that she has had on LGBTQ+ science and policy is truly an inspiration to me in times when I am doubting the importance of my own work. Other scholars such as Dr. Ryan Watson, Lisa Eaton, Christia Brown, and Stephen Russell have also been instrumental in my career and inspiring me to continue on my career path in supporting LGBTQ+ youth and LGBTQ+ science.

What advice would you give to a Graduate student beginning their Ph.D. studies in Developmental Science or related?

You are going to get a lot of mixed messages on how best to use your time and how much you should be working - what matters the most is what balance makes you the most productive and personally fulfilled in your work.

What are some of your hobbies?

Reading and music are my two biggest hobbies with a lot of my interest still being an investment in people's lives and stories. I read a lot of creative essays that are often auto-biographical or creative non-fiction in some way as well as music that is partly inspired by an artist's life. I also believe that these kinds of stories, even when they are difficult to grapple with emotionally, can provide us a window into imagining a brighter and more joyful queer world.

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