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Member Spotlight: Rachel H. Farr

Associate Professor, Psychology, University of Kentucky; SRCD SOGIE Caucus, Member at Large; SRCD Nominations Committee; Dissertation Award Committee

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

I was always interested in relationships -- with romantic partners, with parents or children, with siblings, with other family members -- including "chosen" family, and friends, including all these relationships and how they develop and function among LGBTQ+ community members. This interest really took off in a scholarly way during my undergraduate years at Cornell University when I took several courses in human development, psychology, and LGBTQ+ studies. Although I majored in Animal Science (I initially was pursuing pre-veterinary medicine to become a veterinarian but quickly switched career paths to education), and largely pursued studies that resembled a somewhat typical Biology major, I minored in Education. This

pursuit opened the door to taking coursework in educational psychology and human development, and all these classes were very engaging for me. Around the same time, I was increasingly involved in LGBTQ+ activism and student group involvement on my undergraduate campus. I started to connect dots that I could pursue psychology and study topics regarding LGBTQ+ family relationships that could be a form of advocacy for informing policies and laws that have real impact on LGBTQ+ people and their daily lives. I felt drawn to pursuing a Ph.D. and doing research and teaching at the college or university level. I longed to more directly connect my passion for LGBTQ+ activism and social justice with my interests and experiences in research and teaching, so I began to explore Ph.D. programs in psychology. To gain more experience in specifically conducting psychological research, I sought out an opportunity to volunteer in a developmental psychology research lab at the University of Rochester (with Dr. Judi Smetana and then Ph.D. student, Dr. Nicole Campione-Barr!) while I was full-time teaching in the local public schools that year. This was also a fantastic experience, studying moral development among adolescents in the context of their parent-child relationships, that solidified my desire to apply to Ph.D. programs in developmental psychology. Now, I love that my job involves wearing many hats and it is different nearly every day. I am excited to go to work every day because I love the people I work with -- colleagues and students -- and that I get to my a forever student and learner! I love reading about new research in developmental and family science, and I feel privileged that I get to produce some of it and teach about it myself. I find it incredibly gratifying that the research I have conducted has been informative on larger-scale policy and legal levels, such as being cited in the Supreme Court decision granting federal marriage equality in Obergefell v. Hodges in 2015. To me, who pursued academia for want of conducting research that could positively impact real people's lives, it doesn't get better this -- when the highest court in the United States not only references your work, but rules in a way that IS aligned with your findings!

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

I was inspired to pursue my chosen field of study from personal experiences and identities, and then have been further propelled through the power of excellent mentorship. I totally believe the personal is professional, and I embrace the overlap (at least most days)! I am an LGBTQ+ parent who researches LGBTQ+ parent families, and I grew up in an adoptive family (although I acknowledge my birth privilege as I myself am not an adopted person) and I study adoptive families. What is personal to me about these topics has fueled my ongoing professional interest in serving these communities in research and scholarship. My personal experiences helped me to begin envisioning possible ways that I could integrate my interests in LGBTQ+ activism, social justice, diversity & inclusion, with my academic and professional interests in

education, teaching, mentoring, and conducting research. I feel so fortunate that I was able to complete my Ph.D. at the University of Virginia with the fantastic Dr. Charlotte Patterson, and then become a postdoctoral scholar at UMass Amherst with mentorship from the terrific Dr. Hal Grotevant. I am inspired by my mentors, past and present, including fabulous scholars at UK such as Dr. Christia Brown and Dr. Sherry Rostosky. I love dreaming big and find that to be one of the most fulfilling aspects of pursuing a career as an academic engaged in research and teaching a researcher and teacher. I am incredibly grateful to my mentors and my family who have continually believed in me and supported my dreams.

What is your best SRCD memory?

I had an especially memorable first SRCD in Denver, CO in 2009 as a 3rd-year Ph.D. student, hanging out and bonding with my wonderful fellow UVA grad students (looking at you, Drs. Sam Tornello, Robyn Kondrad, Carrie Palmquist, Matt Lerner, and Eric Smith), as well as presenting a talk for the first time at a biennial meeting – on the experiences of gay adoptive fathers and their children. It was incredible and inspiring (and a little nerve-wracking!) to have scholars such as Dr. Susan Golombok, Dr. Ellen Pinderhughes, and my advisor, Dr. Charlotte Patterson in the audience! Charlotte also treated my labmate Sam and me to dinner in Denver with Dr. Margaret (Margie) Rosario, which was a great mentoring and networking opportunity as well as lots of fun!

What are some of your hobbies?

When I'm not busy with my family, including our 5-year-old twins Erin and Patrick, I love going for runs or hikes. We're all big UK fans (Go Big Blue!) and love to cheer on our wildcats at a variety of sporting events. We're also engaged in lots of Pokemon Go these days. I enjoy visiting our local breweries and distilleries here in and around beautiful Lexington, KY. I binge watch many shows on Netflix or other streaming services that I say "benefit my job somehow" because I argue they are about diverse family relationships.

Why did you join the SOGIE Caucus and how does it facilitate connection among members all year long?

Since its inception, I have been enthusiastically involved with the SOGIE Caucus. I got involved because I very much believe in and want to contribute to its purpose and mission. The Caucus is also a perfect fit for me as a scholar and the work I do. I love the people who I get to work with and involvement in the Caucus allows me to fortify existing relationships and forge new ones. Thrilled to be elected (now twice – thank you!) Member-At-Large, I am committed to supporting rigorous and intersectional LGBTQ+ scholarship and the professional

development of LGBTQ+ students and colleagues. It's so rewarding to stay connected year-round (among other avenues) through our listserv, communications on Slack, virtual committee meetings, and in-person meetings at conferences!

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SOGIE CAUCUS WEBSITE

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