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Member Spotlight: Ruby van Vliet

Doctoral Candidate, University of Groningen; Member of the SRCD SOGIE Caucus

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Why did you decide to choose developmental science as a course of study or career?

After graduating with a bachelor's in art therapy, I continued my student job as a daycare teacher. Ten years went by pretty fast, and it was only after I had worked myself up to being a location manager that I realized I was pretty unhappy in my career. I struggled with implementing top-down policies in practice. It was time to make a drastic change: I swapped my daycare job for an evening job at a bar, allowing me to go back to university during the day. I followed an inspiring master's program where my focus shifted from supporting children with their problems to preventing or eliminating these problems through research on bottom-up strategies aimed at achieving social change. This ideology is something I feel very passionate about and incorporate into my current research on sexually and gender diverse students' school experiences.

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

One day, a boy from my daycare group found a four-leaf clover. He gifted it to me and said, “Ruby, you can have my luck.” As the social media cliché states, ‘sharing is caring’, and I received this as an enormous compliment. I’m not sure if it was the luck I then received that helped me find my current supervisors, but they too are keen on sharing and thus provide me with many important career opportunities. For example, whenever my primary supervisor, Dr. Laura Baams, gets invited to talk about her work, she asks me to tag along. By doing so, she shows that she cares, making me feel that she believes in my qualities and encourages my ambitions.

What advice would you give to a prospective graduate student thinking about beginning their Ph.D. studies in the developmental science field?

Do it! And don't feel like a failure if it doesn't work out and you need to change your career path.

What is your best SRCD memory?

During the last year's Pride Month, there was an online queer celebration party for all SRCD SOGIE Caucus members. It brought me great pleasure to see many of the authors I only knew through reading their scholarly papers dancing in front of their cameras.

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

Recently, I joined the SOGIE Caucus Programming Committee because it was something I wanted to contribute to, and it seemed like a great networking opportunity. With the committee we have just launched a queer mentorship program aimed at creating new, long-term connections. I highly recommend other Ph.D. students to also join a caucus committee! I was pretty nervous before the first meeting, what could I possibly contribute among such seasoned academics? However, my nerves quickly vanished thanks to the friendly atmosphere and the enthusiastic way they invited me to share my ideas.