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Member Spotlight: Valerie N. Adams-Bass, Ph.D.

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How did you choose developmental science as a career?

I worked directly in communities with mostly Black/African American adolescents. Working with them and conversing with them encouraged me to pursue developmental science as a resource for supporting them and advocating for them in spaces where their experiences were absent from conversations about how to "fix" or support Black adolescents.

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

Yes

1. All of the young people who kept me asking myself, "What can I do to help and support you?"—those in the United States, Namibia, and South Africa.
2. My sister Felicia, who modeled nerding out on your passion
3. My Ph.D. Dream Team:

- Dr. Howard Stevenson, who provided me space to grow and stretch while pursuing my degree. When I said, "I am going to ZA for a year," he said, "You can propose virtually"—before digital proposals and dissertations were normal.
- Diana Slaughter-Kotzin, whose diplomatic storytelling and support sometimes felt like "more work" but became valuable as I exited Ph.D.-land (my word for the process).
- Sonja Peterson-Lewis, the quantitative wizard who thinks in numbers but is mindful of the communities she researches. Her model as a mixed, multi-method researcher should be the platinum standard for working with and in communities.
- Monique Ward, who met with me, generously shared her running bibliography of media scholarship, and asked me hard questions about my research model and theories.

P.S. Slaughter-Kotzin and Ward said, "Take out that Edutainment Theory—no one will accept it." Lately, I see it has crossed the ocean and is now showing up in media research years later. Together, all of these people have been a motivating and powerful conglomerate mentor for me.

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

Please work in the communities that you wish to serve through your research. I've had young people urgently want to go straight through from undergrad to master's to Ph.D. I appreciate the urgency, but I strongly believe real work experience in a community—where you are truly listening and working with people—is a priceless asset to your studies. Work to learn, not to pad your résumé.

What is your best SRCD memory?

Working with colleagues on the SRCD Black COVID-19 brief. It was an urgent need, an organic response, and a collegial experience with scholars—most of whom I had not worked directly with before this manuscript project. We were committed to both the scholarly community and the Black community dealing with COVID-19. There was no competition in our collaboration. Our early draft became a model for the other caucuses

working on their briefs and later for our policy paper. Special thanks to Mia Smith-Bynum for her leadership in bringing us together.

Why did you join the Black Caucus? How does being a caucus member benefit you, and how does the experience facilitate connection among members?

I joined the caucus to be in community with others who have similar professional interests and perhaps some similar professional experiences. Being a member has provided me with opportunities to hear about new scholarship from colleagues and to cheer for and support colleagues who may not be as joyfully supported in other academic spaces or institutions.

Being a member of the SRCD Black Caucus Steering Committee provides opportunities to work with scholars whom I probably wouldn't work with or meet unless we were writing together. It's neat to meet people you cite—both virtually and in person.