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Member Spotlight: Mimi Arbeit, Ph.D.

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

I was teaching middle school health education, and I wanted to revolutionize sex ed in the U.S. I haven't – but I did learn a lot about how white supremacy, cis-hetero-patriarchy, and capitalism contribute to why sex ed is so often not only lacking but actively harmful. The problem is not just that we don't know what to do – it's that we have enemies. We have groups of people – with violent genocidal agendas – actively scheming to dehumanize and disenfranchise us and our loved ones. I still want great sex ed for all! To get there, I'm using developmental science as one path among many for growing antifascist movements for collective liberation.

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

Rich Lerner and Nancy Deutsch are award-winning academic mentors who have shaped my developmental science career and my life trajectory overall. Thank you, always, to both of you. I also want to thank two

mentors I connected with through antifascist community organizing – Heather Cronk and Emily Gorcenski. They have each mentored me as an organizer and generously extended their mentorship to guide me in bringing antifascist praxis into my developmental science work, too. Thank you, always, to both of you.

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

Join a social justice community organizing team that's part of our broader movements for collective liberation. That's my advice for everyone right now, not just scientists, to be honest. Academia, shaped by white male supremacy, colonialism, and capitalism, is very individualistic. You'll have several milestones you need to meet independently. But revolutionary transformative change is a collaborative process. We need each other. We need affinity groups, pods, roles, relationships, accountability. We need coalitions with clear agreements and strategic action plans. We need to connect with global freedom struggles so together we can face climate disasters, authoritarian governments, and genocidal violence. Join your grad student labor union. Join antifascist movements beyond academia and maybe even beyond the scope of your research interests. Trans and queer liberation, racial justice, food, housing, mutual aid, abortion access, community safety, deportation defense, prison abolition. How can antifascist praxis guide you in finding or forming a local team organizing for social justice?

What is your best SRCD memory?

Friday night of the 2021 virtual SRCD conference, amid covid pandemic stay-home life, when the caucuses had an amazing virtual dance party.

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

I joined the SOGIE caucus because I'm queer and nonbinary and I like being with queer and trans people. I enjoy our virtual community meetings and the projects that come out of our connections with each other. After SRCD published the Toomey et al. (2022) statement of the evidence, Gender-Affirming Policies Support Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth's Health, a group of us together generated an op ed, a media advisory, and a set of talking points to use developmental science in support of trans youth. Through people I connected with in the SOGIE caucus, I became part of the group Developmental Scholars Against Genocide and helped write a statement opposing the U.S.-backed Israeli genocide of Palestinians. Being part of this group is important to me as a queer person, as a Jewish person, and as a youth development scholar

concerned for the safety and freedom of Palestinian children. My experience in the SOGIE caucus is also helping me grow a network of antifascist developmental scientists, to confront multiple interconnected fascist attacks. Antifascist praxis is about collective action – groups of people collaborating to oppose genocidal agendas. I'm glad to have these spaces to build power together!