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Member Spotlight: Eleanor K. Seaton, Ph.D.

AUTHOR

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Bio:

Dr. Eleanor K. Seaton is a Professor in the Psychology department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Dr. Seaton is a developmental psychologist, and international expert on racism-related experiences, racial identity, and mental health among the Black population. Using a range of methodologies, including prospective cohort studies, daily diary assessment, qualitative techniques, and nationally representative data, Dr. Seaton documents the toll racism exerts on Black adolescents' mental health and development. Dr. Seaton has increasingly focused on early adolescence in order to understand the intersection of pubertal development, race-ethnicity, and gender among Black children and adolescents. Dr. Seaton has also incorporated physiological indicators to examine how racism gets "under the skin". Dr. Seaton's ultimate goal is to uncover how multiple dimensions of racism (e.g., individual, institutional, cultural, structural) result in various societal disparities (e.g., health, educational, criminal justice, wealth) among the Black population. Dr. Seaton is a fellow in Division 7 of the American Psychological Association

(APA), and a former co-host of Break it Down on AZ PBS where she discussed how racism impacts various facets of society. Dr. Seaton tends to read, bake desserts, journal, shop, travel, watch Turner Classic Movies, and dance to Chicago style house music when relaxing.

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

A: *My interest in adolescence grew out of my sorority's Black teen program for girls, which I coordinated during my senior year of college. I spent a lot of time with the girls, and I modified the program to observe changes in their behavior throughout the academic year. This experience was foundational for my continued interest in the lives of Black adolescents. I believe that developmental science chose me!*

Q: What advice would you give to a student beginning their Ph.D. studies in developmental science or related?

A: *I have five recommendations:*

1) Trust your instincts: Your instincts will never fail you because they know what is best for you.

2) Educate yourself: We were taught a White male supremacist version of history, social science, philosophy, geography, humanities, arts and physical science. We all have a lot to unlearn!

3) Check your biases and assumptions: We have been socialized in an imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy (bell hooks), and we have remnants of those ideologies. We all have them so don't pretend that you don't.

4) Turn to the arts: Movies, books, films, music, paintings, sculptures, plays, etc. educate in ways that are distinct, important, and add to academic knowledge.

5) Find a way to connect to your population of interest outside of academic connections and maintain this connection.

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

A: *I attended a Black Caucus pre-conference before my first SRCD conference. The room was filled with seminal Black scholars providing wisdom and knowledge about Black youth, and I was hooked! The Black Caucus listserv keeps us connected because it provides opportunities for information sharing. I love when announcements about tenure and promotion come out because the chorus of congratulations is heart-warming. In those moments, we are all rooting for each other to succeed, and it is a beautiful thing to behold. The Black Caucus is like an academic family, and I will stay connected to it as long as I am in the academy.*

For more information about Eleanor K. Seaton, Ph.D.:

www.reylab.com/Member