

# Couples Research & Therapy *NEWSLETTER*

The Newsletter of the Couples Research & Therapy ABCT–SIG, Spring 2019

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## Letter from the Editors

We are delighted to share with you the Spring 2019 edition of the ABCT Couples SIG Newsletter. We would like to thank all of the labs who submitted updates, and are happy to share your achievements with the SIG!

In addition to lab updates, kudos, and “hot off the press” publications, we are pleased to share with you the featured article, “**Effects of Romantic Involvement on Substance Use Among Young Sexual and Gender Minorities**” (pg. 5) by **Dr. Sarah Whitton** and her team. This piece is a sample of the great work that members of the SIG continue to do, and underscores the SIG’s dedication to exploring relationship factors within diverse populations. Additionally, the newsletter features comments from newly-appointed faculty co-leaders, **Drs. Christina Balderrama-Durbin and Mikhila Wildey (pg. 2)**; we are thrilled to have their leadership in the SIG and have included their reflections on this past year’s ABCT convention in Washington, DC. Also included are updates from the SIG student co-leaders, **Judith Biesen and Alex Wang (pg.3)**, who provide further information on the upcoming SIG Cocktail event at this year’s convention in Atlanta.

We hope everyone has had a productive academic year thus far! We look forward to providing you with another round of updates prior to the conference in November. Until then. . .

**Thank you for making the Couples SIG Newsletter possible!**

*Eileen Barden and Alexandra Wojda*

*Couples SIG Newsletter Editors:*

*Eileen Barden, BA  
Binghamton University (SUNY)  
[ebarden3@binghamton.edu](mailto:ebarden3@binghamton.edu)*

*Alexandra Wojda, BA  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
[akwojda@live.unc.edu](mailto:akwojda@live.unc.edu)*

## Letter from the SIG Co-Leaders

Christina Balderrama-Durbin<sup>1</sup> & Mikhila Wildey<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Binghamton University (SUNY);* <sup>2</sup>*Grand Valley State University*

Hello colleagues!

As your new Co-Leaders, we are looking forward to working with you over the next two years. Thank you for your continued membership, and a special thank you to both CJ Fleming and Julianne Flanagan for all of their hard work as past Co-Leaders of the SIG!

Mikhila Wildey is an Assistant Professor at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, MI, and Christina Balderrama-Durbin is an Assistant Professor at Binghamton University in Binghamton, NY. Please feel free to contact us at [wildeymi@gvsu.edu](mailto:wildeymi@gvsu.edu) or [cbalderr@binghamton.edu](mailto:cbalderr@binghamton.edu).

For those who attended ABCT this past fall in Washington DC, we had an exciting meeting with lots of great discussion for how to shape our future SIG events. Our preconference event included an informative panel presentation by Drs. Anthony Chambers, Vickie Bhatia, and Galena Rhoades featuring the topics of Diversity in Education, Treatment, and Research in the Couples Field. Additionally, we enjoyed our first ever student research lightning symposium and speed mentoring events - they were a hit! Our business meeting was well-attended and we elected a new Treasurer, Jamie Winters. We awarded the first place Bob Weiss graduate student poster award to Alexandra Wojda and second place to McKenzie Roddy. The undergraduate poster award went to Shayla Weiser. Thanks to Julianne Flanagan, CJ Fleming, Jennifer Langhinrichsen-Rohling, and Justin Lavner for judging. Also, thank you to all of you who volunteered to be on the program committee for next fall's conference. Your work is important as we strive to be well represented in the context of the broader conference.

We also had a fantastic discussion surrounding how to improve inclusivity within our SIG. On that note, we thank Brian Baucom for taking the lead and starting the Underrepresented Scholars Fund. Anyone is welcome to donate to this fund, and we will be using these funds to support underrepresented minority students to attend the ABCT conference. To donate to the fund, you can Paypal or Venmo ([bbaucom@gmail.com](mailto:bbaucom@gmail.com)) to Brian directly.

As we think ahead to our 2019 conference in Atlanta, we are working on making a final plan for our preconference event guided by interests expressed at the business meeting. We will keep you posted as we finalize the agenda. Also, keep an eye out for calls for cocktail hour posters and additional conference activities.

We hope you all have a wonderful summer!

Christina & Mikhila

## **Letter from the Student Co-Presidents**

Judith Biesen<sup>1</sup>&Alex Wang<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *University of Notre Dame*; <sup>2</sup> *Binghamton University*

Greetings from your returning Student Leaders!

We are very excited to continue our service to this amazing organization!

### **Couples SIG Cocktail Party!**

We are currently working on organizing the Couples SIG Cocktail Party. More information will be forthcoming as we finalize the venue. So please keep your eyes peeled for details in the fall newsletter as well as a listserv RSVP email.

We want to thank all the faculty members who made time for this fun event last year! We have received a lot of positive feedback about the opportunity to mingle with so many faculty and professional members! And we are looking forward to your presence this year as well!

### **Get Involved!**

We are continuing our journey of optimizing our role as student leaders in this professional organization. We would love feedback from you about how we can best serve you and improve your experience in this organization! Please contact us with your comments, questions and suggestions! And don't forget to join the SIG and the SIG listserv ([couples-sig@sfu.ca](mailto:couples-sig@sfu.ca)) if you haven't already!

We are looking forward to seeing you in Atlanta!

Judith Biesen  
([judithbiesen@gmail.com](mailto:judithbiesen@gmail.com))

Alex Wang  
([bwang@binghamton.edu](mailto:bwang@binghamton.edu))

## ABCT Couples SIG Treasurer's Update

Jamie Winters

VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System

Hello SIG Members!

I hope that all of you are doing well. Here is an update of our membership status and dues:

Our current dues-paying membership, including those who have paid dues within the last 5 years, is 206 (84 professionals, 122 students). This includes 15 new members (4 professional, 11 students) paying dues so far this year. Please continue to spread the word and encourage others to join as we always love to welcome new members, particularly during our upcoming conference!

The balance last reported in June was \$1791.66. Since then, we have taken in \$1500 in dues. We have paid out \$300 for poster awards, \$492.97 for the party at the 2018 conference, and 99.90 for webpage fees. This leaves us with a current balance of \$2398.79. Thanks to all who have paid their dues!

Remember it is not too late to pay this year's dues. If you use paypal, it is important to designate the payment as a "send to friends and family" to avoid processing fees. You can also mail a check to the address below. Dues are \$25 for professional members and \$5 for students and retired members.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns about dues or membership.

Jamie

Send checks for membership dues to:

Jamie Winters, PhD

VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System 116A

Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105

or

Paypal: [Jamiewin@umich.edu](mailto:Jamiewin@umich.edu)

## Media Coordinators Update

Jessica Ferreira<sup>1</sup> and Anna Gilmour<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Simon Fraser University; <sup>2</sup>University of Colorado Boulder

If you ever have any information you would like to share with fellow SIG members via the listserv or website (e.g. job postings, study recruitment, or anything you believe will be of interest), please don't hesitate to email us. We will be happy to disseminate that information to the SIG. Furthermore, please be in touch if your contact information ever needs updating on the website or listserv. Thanks so much everyone and we look forward to seeing you in Atlanta, GA this year!

- Jessica and Anna

## FEATURED ARTICLE

### Effects of romantic involvement on substance use among young sexual and gender minorities

Sarah W. Whitton<sup>a</sup>, Christina Dyar<sup>a</sup>, Michael E. Newcomb<sup>b</sup>, Brian Mustanski<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Cincinnati

<sup>b</sup> Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health and Wellbeing, Northwestern University

Full article citation: Whitton, S. W., Dyar, C., Newcomb, M. E., & Mustanski, B. (2018). Effects of romantic involvement on substance use among young sexual and gender minorities. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, *191*, 215–222.

#### Introduction

Substance use and heavy drinking represent a significant public health problem, particularly during adolescence and young adulthood (Bachman et al., 2002; Johnston, 2010). Among young people, sexual and gender minorities (SGM) are at 2–3 times higher risk for cigarette, alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine use than heterosexuals (Marshal et al., 2008). It is therefore important to identify factors that may protect young SGM from substance use. One well-established protective factor against problematic substance use among heterosexual adults is marriage. Longitudinal studies consistently show that entry into marriage is followed by reduced binge drinking and drug use (Duncan et al., 2006; Fleming et al., 2010; Staff et al., 2010). According to social control theories, spouses monitor one another, discouraging risky behaviors such as heavy drinking, smoking, and drug use (Lewis and Butterfield, 2007). The internalization of behavioral norms for the social role of a spouse may also reduce substance use, which is often viewed as more appropriate for single individuals (Umberson, 1987). Further, marriage is associated with tangible legal and financial benefits (Waite and Gallagher, 2000) and fulfills individuals' needs for social connection, emotional support, and intimacy (House et al., 1988). Therefore, it may also reduce substance use by decreasing financial stress, loneliness, and isolation, which many individuals cope with through substance use.

#### *1.1. Relationship involvement and substance use among adolescents and young adults*

It remains unclear whether the “marriage benefit” to substance use generalizes to the dating relationships of young people. Young romantic partners may not exert social control over each other or monitor their romantic partner's behavior, and the social pressure to refrain from risky behaviors when married is not typically present in young dating relationships. In fact, involvement in dating during adolescence has been linked with increases in other high-risk behaviors, including delinquency (Cui et al., 2012; Joyner and Udry, 2000) and externalizing behaviors (Furman and Collibee, 2014; van Dulmen et al., 2008). Further, the non-marital romantic relationships of youth generally do not provide legal or financial benefits that might alleviate stressors associated with substance use. To the contrary, among adolescents, romantic involvement has been associated with depression (Davila et al., 2004), possibly due to the stresses of dating that teens lack the emotional resources to handle (Davila, 2008). Alternatively, being in an intimate relationship may discourage substance use among young people, partly by limiting engagement in the single “hook-up” culture, where heavy drinking and drug use is common (e.g., Owen et al., 2010). Romantic involvement may also provide youth with a sense of accomplishment and social identity (Montgomery, 2005), along with emotional intimacy not offered by other social partners. Both factors may reduce youth's use of substances to cope with loneliness or negative affect. Research examining the association between dating relationships and substance use among young people is fairly limited and inconsistent. Cross-sectional studies of young adults have found that, compared to those who are single, those in committed relationships report less alcohol consumption (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Whitton et al., 2013) but do not differ in use of tobacco or illicit drugs (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Simon and Barrett, 2010). Some longitudinal research on young adults has indicated that substance use declines when individuals enter dating (Furman and Collibee, 2014) and nonmarital cohabiting relationships

(Duncan et al., 2006; Staff et al., 2010), though effects are not as consistent or strong as for marriage. However, another study found that entry into a relationship between ages 18 and 20 was not associated with reduced heavy drinking or marijuana use and was associated with increases in smoking (Fleming et al., 2010). Further, romantic involvement has been associated with greater alcohol (Davies and Windle, 2000; Miller et al., 2009) and substance use (Furman and Collibee, 2014) in adolescents (< 18 years).

### *1.2. Relationship involvement and substance use among sexual and gender minorities*

It also is unclear whether romantic involvement has effects on substance use among SGM, particularly youth. Among adults, same-sex romantic relationships are exceedingly similar to different-sex relationships in relationship quality (e.g., Kurdek, 2005) and associations between relationship functioning and partners' mental health (Whitton and Kuryluk, 2014). Sexual minority and heterosexual adults report similar efforts to promote healthy behaviors in their romantic partners, including discouraging heavy substance use (Reczek and Umberson, 2012), suggesting the "marriage benefit" observed in heterosexual adults is likely to generalize to SGM adults. It is also possible that the increased risk of substance use associated with heterosexual romantic involvement during adolescence will generalize to SGM. In fact, this effect might be more pronounced among SGM youth, because dating may increase stress by activating any internal conflicts about sexuality and may raise risk for discrimination and family rejection by revealing their same-sex attractions. Further, involvement with a same-sex partner may promote engagement in SGM communities, which often have tolerant social norms regarding substance use (Cochran et al., 2012; Hatzenbuehler et al., 2008). Alternately, SGM youth may benefit more psychologically than heterosexual youth do from having a romantic partner, who may provide social support lacking from their parents and schoolmates (Katz-Wise and Hyde, 2012; Ryan et al., 2009). Similarly, increased affiliation with the LGBT community may buffer the effects of minority stress (Johns et al., 2013), thereby reducing substance use as a coping method. Unfortunately, we were unable to locate any studies investigating associations between relationship involvement and substance use in SGM.

### *1.3. Potential moderators of relationship involvement effects on substance use*

Although often treated as a homogenous group, SGM young people are diverse in age, gender, and sexual identity (i.e., self-identified sexual orientation). As we seek to understand how relationship involvement may affect substance use among young SGM, we must explore potential differences between demographic groups. First, the effects of dating on substance use among SGM youth may show developmental differences across adolescence and young adulthood. The normative trajectory model theorizes that romantic involvement undermines social-emotional health during adolescence when it is nonnormative, but promotes wellbeing beginning in young adulthood when it is normative (Connolly et al., 2013) and represents a salient developmental task (Furman and Collibee, 2014). Consistent with this theory, romantic involvement was associated with more substance use in middle adolescence but less substance use in young adulthood in a predominantly heterosexual sample (Furman and Collibee, 2014). Effects of romantic involvement on young SGM substance use may also vary by gender. Findings from heterosexual samples are highly inconsistent: Among young adults, some studies have found no gender differences in the beneficial effects of romantic involvement on substance use (Fleming et al., 2010; Whitton et al., 2013) whereas others found stronger effects for women than men on binge drinking (Duncan et al., 2006) and substance use problems (Simon and Barrett, 2010). Among heterosexual adolescents, some have speculated that dating may promote substance use more in female than male adolescents because all youth are more likely to be introduced to substance use by a male (Miller et al., 2009). However, most studies find no gender differences in effects of romantic involvement on adolescent substance use (Beckmeyer, 2015; Furman and Collibee, 2014; Joyner and Udry, 2000). Further, this theory assumes adolescents date someone of a different gender, often not the case for SGM youth. Specific sexual identities may also influence how romantic involvement affects substance use. Although dating is associated with better psychological health among gay and lesbian individuals, among bisexuals it is associated with greater risk for anxiety disorders (Feinstein et al., 2016) and more psychological distress (Whitton et al., 2018). These differences may be attributable to unique stressors bisexuals face when involved in romantic relationships, including invalidation of their bisexual identity by others who assume they are lesbian/gay or heterosexual based on their current partner's gender (Dyar et al., 2014) and pressure from non-bisexual partners

to change their sexual identity (Bostwick and Hequembourg, 2014). The psychological distress resulting from such experiences might raise risk for substance use among bisexuals who enter romantic relationships. Exploring this possibility is important, as bisexual youth use cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs at markedly higher rates than heterosexual, gay, and lesbian youth (Marshal et al., 2008).

#### *1.4. The current study*

In the current study, we aimed to examine how relationship involvement influences substance use among SGM youth. Using multiwave longitudinal data from a large and diverse sample, we assessed whether, within-persons, relationship involvement is associated with the use of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, and other illicit drugs. That is, do SGM youth tend to use these substances less (or more) often at times when they are in a relationship versus when they are single? Further, we examined whether these effects differ by age, gender, and sexual identity.

### **Material and methods**

#### *2.1. Sample and procedure*

Participants were 248 sexual and gender minority youth from Chicago who participated in Project Q2, an IRB-approved longitudinal study of LGBT youth. Project Q2 employed an accelerated longitudinal design in which participants who varied in age at baseline (from 16 to 20 years; collected from 2007 to 2009) provided eight waves of data over 5 years (baseline and 6-, 12-, 18-, 24-, 42-, 48-, and 60-month follow-up). Retention at each wave ranged from 80 to 90%. See Mustanski et al. (2010, 2016) for details about Project Q2. These analyses used data from all waves except 18-month follow-up when relationship involvement was not assessed. Verifications during followups revealed that 13 participants misreported their age at baseline; data these participants provided when outside the study age range were removed (22 time-points). Participants were paid \$25-\$50 per wave. See Table 1 for sample demographics at baseline.

### **Measures**

#### *2.2.1. Demographics*

At baseline, participant age, gender, sexual identity, and race/ethnicity were assessed. Age at each wave was calculated using the birth date and assessment date. The following measures were collected at each wave:

#### *2.2.2. Current relationship involvement*

Participants were asked about their current and recent relationships. Those who reported a current romantic relationship at a given wave were coded 1, others as 0.

#### *2.2.3. Cigarette use*

Participants were asked, "Do you currently smoke cigarettes?" Those who said yes were asked, "How many cigarettes a day do you smoke?" (open-ended). This variable represents the current number of cigarettes smoked per day (non-smokers coded as 0).

#### *2.2.4. Alcohol use*

Participants were asked about frequency of alcohol use: "In the last 6 months, how many days did you drink alcohol?" and quantity "Think of all the times you have had a drink during the last 6 months. How many drinks did you usually have each time?" Quantity and frequency were multiplied to create an index of alcohol use (Bartholow and Heinz, 2006; Greenfield, 2000), or the number of alcoholic drinks consumed over the past 6 months.

#### *2.2.5. Marijuana use*

Participants' open-ended responses to the question, "In the last 6 months, how many times did you use marijuana?" were used as an index of marijuana use. This variable represents a number of times the participant used marijuana in the past 6 months.

### 2.2.6. Other illicit drug use

Participants were asked, “In the last 6 months, did you use [illicit drug]?” Illicit drugs included cocaine, methamphetamines, and club drugs (e.g., ecstasy, ketamine, GHB). Because endorsement was low across waves (0.0%–2.0% methamphetamines, 3.8–10.0% cocaine, and 5.8–10.8% club drugs), we created a dichotomous variable indicating any use of illicit drugs other than marijuana in the past 6 months (9.5–15.6% of participants per wave).

## 2.3. Analyses

Mplus Version 7 with robust maximum likelihood estimation was used to conduct analyses (Muthén and Muthén, 2012). 10.7% of data were missing and were handled using full information maximum likelihood (FIML), which was appropriate given preliminary analyses indicating data were missing at random (i.e., missingness was not predicted by available variables). To test hypotheses, we used multilevel modeling: Repeated measures (Level 1) were nested within individuals (Level 2). To assess within-person associations between relationship involvement and each substance use outcome (i.e., cigarette, alcohol, marijuana, other illicit drug use), the given substance use variable at each time point was predicted by relationship involvement at that time point. This Level 1 association was modeled as random (i.e., free to differ between participants) to allow for tests of moderation by demographic characteristics. Age (grand mean centered) at each time point was included at Level 1, and age, gender, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity were included as controls at Level 2. We used negative binomial distributions to model cigarette, alcohol, and marijuana use because these variables were over-dispersed (standard deviation > mean; see Table 2); though we also considered a zero-inflated model of cigarette use, Akaike and Bayesian Information Criterion (AIC and BIC) values were lower for the negative binomial model ( $\Delta AIC = -28.84$ ;  $\Delta BIC = -97.80$ ), suggesting it was more parsimonious and had a better fit to the data than a zero-inflated model (Raftery, 1995). A Bernoulli distribution was used to model other illicit drug use (a dichotomous variable). Next, for each substance use variable, we ran three additional models to test for moderation of the within-person association between romantic involvement and substance use by: (1) age, (2) sexual identity, and (3) gender. In the age moderated models, a latent variable interaction was added at Level 1 to model the interaction between age and relationship involvement in predicting substance use at each wave (Preacher et al., 2016). In the sexual identity moderated models, sexual identity (lesbian/gay [coded 0]; bisexual [coded 1]) was added to Level 2 as a predictor of the Level 1 association between relationship status and substance use (i.e., cross-level interaction; Aguinis et al., 2013); the 24 participants who identified as unsure or questioning were excluded from these models due to their small number (but included in all other models). In the gender moderated models, gender (cisgender men [coded 0]; cisgender women [coded 1]) was added as a Level 2 predictor of the Level 1 association between relationship involvement and substance use; the 20 transgender participants were excluded from these models (but included in all others).

## Results

Table 2 includes intra-class correlations (ICCs) for binary and continuous variables and means, standard deviations, and medians for all variables. To reduce the impact of extreme outliers in alcohol, cigarette, and marijuana use, these variables were Winsorized (Yang et al., 2011): cigarette use at 3 standard deviations above the mean (17.27) and alcohol and marijuana use at the 95th percentile (190 for marijuana; 90 for alcohol) because outliers remained when using 3 standard deviations above the mean.

### 3.1. Cigarette use

In the unmoderated model for cigarette use (Table 3), there was a significant average within-person effect of relationship involvement on cigarette use. Participants smoked 1.26 times more cigarettes per day at waves when they were currently in a relationship than at waves when they were single. Despite the significant variance in this within-person association across participants, it was not moderated by age, gender, or sexual identity.

### 3.2. Alcohol use

There was a significant average within-person effect of relationship involvement on alcohol use (see unmoderated model, Table 4). At waves when they were romantically involved, youth reported consuming 36% fewer alcoholic drinks in the past 6 months than at waves when they were single. Age and sexual identity did not moderate this association, but gender did (see Fig. 1). Simple rate ratios indicated romantic involvement was associated with less alcohol use for both groups, but this effect was stronger for cisgender men ( $b = -.65$ ,  $SE=.01$ ,  $z = -66.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $RR = .52$ ) than cisgender women ( $b = -.32$ ,  $SE=.01$ ,  $z = -35.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $RR = .73$ ).

### 3.3. Marijuana use

In the unmoderated model (Table 5), the average within-person effect of relationship involvement on marijuana use was not significant. Gender and sexual identity moderated this effect, but not age (see Fig. 1). Simple rate ratios indicated that, within-individuals, relationship involvement was not associated with marijuana use for lesbian/gay individuals ( $b=.08$ ,  $SE=.06$ ,  $z=1.27$ ,  $p= .20$ ;  $RR = 1.08$ ) or cisgender women ( $b = -.09$ ,  $SE=.14$ ,  $z = -.66$ ,  $p= .51$ ;  $RR = .91$ ). However, at waves when bisexual individuals ( $b=.84$ ,  $SE=.05$ ,  $z=18.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $RR = 2.31$ ) and cisgender men ( $b=.29$ ,  $SE=.15$ ,  $z=1.95$ ,  $p= .05$ ;  $RR = 1.34$ ) reported current relationship involvement, they reported more frequent past 6-month marijuana use than at waves when they were single.

### 3.4. Other illicit drug use

There was a significant negative within-person effect of relationship involvement on the use of illicit drugs other than marijuana (see unmoderated model, Table 6). At waves when participants reported relationship involvement, they were 27% less likely to have used other illicit drugs in the preceding 6 months than at waves when they were single ( $OR=.73$ ). This within-person association was not moderated by age or gender but was moderated by sexual identity. Simple odds ratios indicated that current relationship involvement was associated with lower likelihood of recent illicit drug use for lesbian/gay individuals ( $b = -.58$ ,  $SE=.09$ ,  $z = -6.29$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $OR = .56$ ) but with a higher likelihood of recent illicit drug use for bisexuals ( $b=.87$ ,  $SE=.13$ ,  $z=6.82$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $OR = 2.39$ ). Lesbian/gay individuals were 44% less likely to have recently used other illicit drugs during waves when they were in relationships than when they were single, whereas bisexual individuals were 2.39 times more likely to have used these drugs during waves when they were in relationships than when they were single (Fig. 1).

## Discussion

In the first study to explore how romantic relationship involvement influences the substance use of young SGM, we used multiwave longitudinal data to assess whether young SGM used less (or more) alcohol, cigarettes, and other illicit drugs when romantically partnered than when single. In contrast to the normative trajectory model, which suggests that romantic involvement may promote risky behavior in adolescence but inhibit it in young adulthood (Connolly et al., 2013), we found no evidence of developmental differences in the withinperson association between romantic involvement and SGM substance use across the ages of 16 to 26 years. Rather, findings suggested that the effects of romantic involvement among SGM youth differ across substances and demographic subgroups. Relationship involvement demonstrated the most consistent positive effects on alcohol use, with participants reporting 36% less recent alcohol use when in a relationship than when single. Though this effect was stronger for men than women, it was present across gender, age and sexual identity. Echoing evidence that entering a relationship reduces drinking among heterosexual young adults (Duncan et al., 2006; Furman and Collibee, 2014; Staff et al., 2010), this finding suggests that romantic involvement may represent a broad protective factor against alcohol use among SGM youth. Similarly, romantic involvement had a protective effect against the use of illicit drugs other than marijuana for participants who identified as gay/lesbian (but not bisexual), reducing their chances of having recently used by 78%. Perhaps by finding a partner, young SGM escape norms of heavy drinking and drug use in the bar/party scene, a common forum for meeting potential romantic or sexual partners (Claxton et al., 2015; Owen et al., 2010). In contrast to its positive effects on alcohol and other illicit drug use, dating does not appear to protect SGM against marijuana use. In

fact, romantic involvement was not associated with marijuana use for gay/lesbian youth or cisgender women and was associated with increased recent use among cisgender men and bisexuals. These findings are consistent with a growing literature suggesting that the marriage benefit to marijuana use does not extend to non-marital different-sex relationships of young adults (Duncan et al., 2006; Fleming et al., 2010). Further, they suggest dating may be a risk factor for marijuana use among young SGM men. This was surprising because, in past research, there have generally been no gender differences (Fleming et al., 2010; Staff et al., 2010), and any evidence of romantic involvement increasing marijuana use has been limited to early and middle adolescence (Beckmeyer, 2015; Furman and Collibee, 2014). The positive association between romantic involvement and marijuana use may persist into young adulthood among male SGM partly because substance use declines less with age among SGMs than in heterosexuals (Green and Feinstein, 2012). Romantic involvement may also affect marijuana use differently for young male SGM than for their heterosexual counterparts due to differences in partner gender (male partners may smoke more marijuana than heterosexual female partners) or because it increases exposure to SGM communities accepting of marijuana use (Cochran et al., 2012). Romantic involvement was associated with increased drug use for bisexuals. Bisexuals reported 1.34 times more recent marijuana use and were 2.39 times more likely to have recently used other illicit drugs at waves when romantically partnered than when single. These findings add to mounting evidence that the experiences of bisexuals differ markedly from those of other SGM. In addition to being at higher risk for mental health issues (Ross et al., 2017) and substance use (Marshall et al., 2008), bisexuals may not benefit from romantic relationships in the ways that gay, lesbian, and heterosexual young adults do. Together with other findings from this sample indicating that bisexuals report greater psychological distress when romantically involved than when single (Whitton et al., 2018), the current findings suggest that any benefits of dating may be outweighed by the anti-bisexual stigma bisexuals can face from straight and lesbian or gay partners (Bostwick and Hequembourg, 2014; Dyar et al., 2014). Romantic involvement also increased tobacco use across all demographic groups. On average, SGM youth smoked 26% more daily cigarettes when in a relationship than when single. Although this finding contradicts some earlier evidence that cohabitation, engagement, and marriage all reduce cigarette use among young adults (Staff et al., 2010), it is consistent with other studies documenting increased smoking in young adults who enter a romantic relationship (Fleming et al., 2010) or first marriage (women only; Duncan et al., 2006). It is possible these effects are driven by youth entering relationships with partners who smoke; same- and different-sex partners can promote unhealthy habits in each other (Reczek and Umberson, 2012) and teens who date a smoker are more likely to start smoking (Kennedy et al., 2011). Such socialization effects may be particularly present in LGBT communities, where smoking is more common and often perceived as a way to form connections with other SGM youth (National LGBTQ Young Adult Tobacco Project, 2010). Because we did not assess partner tobacco use, future research is needed to explore this possibility. Conclusions should be drawn keeping study limitations in mind. First, because we did not have information on the length of participants' current relationships, it is possible that some of the alcohol, marijuana, and other drug use reported occurred prior to the relationship. Second, there were too few transgender individuals to explore potential differences from cisgender individuals, and we did not capture non-binary gender identities. Future research should explore how relationship involvement is associated with substance use across multiple genders and sexual identities, particularly considering the increasing number of LGBT people who identify as non-binary or transgender (Richards et al., 2016) and with sexual identities other than gay/lesbian and bisexual (e.g., pansexual, queer, asexual). Due to small numbers of participants with some racial/ethnic identities (e.g., White  $n=35$ ; Latino  $n=30$ ), we were unable to test for racial differences in associations; this is an important area for future study. Because we did not collect detailed data on partners or relationships, we could not assess whether findings were influenced by partner gender, gender composition of the relationship (same- vs. different-sex), partner's substance use, or characteristics of the relationship (e.g., commitment, quality). Future research should also account for relationship commitment, given evidence that serious relationships, but not casual or group dating, increase adolescent substance use (Beckmeyer, 2015).

## Conclusions

This study provides novel evidence to support some protective effects of relationship involvement against substance use among young SGM. Being in a romantic relationship appears to reduce drinking among all SGM

youth, and reduce the use of drugs other than marijuana among those who identify as gay or lesbian. Together with evidence that romantic involvement has psychological benefits in this population, reducing the distress associated with victimization they experience related to their minority sexual identity (Whitton et al., 2018), these results support initiatives to promote healthy relationships among SGM youth. Efforts to encourage dating among SGM (e.g., through planned LGBT-focused social events), and to teach healthy relationship skills (Mustanski et al., 2015), may ultimately help reduce the mental health and substance use disparities they face. Such efforts must, however, keep in mind that romantic involvement may raise risk for smoking among all young SGM, as well as for drug use among bisexuals and marijuana use among SGM men. These findings speak to the potential value of anti-tobacco campaigns targeting smoking in LGBT communities and of initiatives to reduce the stigmatization of bisexuality.

# KUDOS!!!

**We'd like to celebrate these special events in the lives of the following SIG members.  
Congratulations to you!**

Dr. Christina Balderrama-Durbin's Couple Adjustment to Stress and Trauma (CAST) Lab

☺ **Christina Balderrama-Durbin** has received funding from NIAAA as a Co-I to develop and test a brief intervention for Veterans with co-morbid PTSD and heavy alcohol use in primary care. This is a collaborative project across three VA sites in upstate New York. She has also been granted the SUNY Presidential Diversity Research Award to support her research examining couple-level minority stress and barriers to couple therapy help-seeking for couples who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

☺ Congratulations to **Seigie Kennedy** and **Alex Wang** who passed their comprehensive exams with flying colors!

Dr. Donald Baucom's UNC Couples Lab

☺ **Dr. Donald Baucom** has received the 2019 University of North Carolina Distinguished Alumn Award for his decades-long commitment to conducting research on intimate relationships at UNC.

☺ **Matt Cohen, MA**, who is currently on internship at Duke University Hospital, has received a post-doctoral fellowship from the UNC's Center for Women's Mood Disorders.

☺ **Kim Pentel, MA** will be moving to Seattle, Washington for her pre-doctoral internship year at the Seattle VA starting this summer.

☺ **Danielle Weber, MA** received a Departmental Undergraduate Teaching Commendation for Fall 2018 in recognition of exceptional course ratings. Additionally, Danielle has recently passed her comps, qualifying her as a doctoral candidate.

☺ **Alexandra Wojda** received the Robert L. Weiss Graduate Student Poster Award from ABCT's Couples Special Interest Group for her poster, *Patterns of Emotional Arousal in Couples With and Without Histories of Intimate Partner Violence*, at ABCT's 2018 convention.

☺ We welcome Emily Carrino, who will be joining us as a first-year doctoral student in the fall. Welcome, Emily!

# KUDOS!!!

**We'd like to celebrate these special events in the lives of the following SIG members. Congratulations to you!**

Drs. Steven Beach & Justin Lavner's UGA Couple and Family Lifespan Health Lab

☺ **Lauren VanderBroek Stice** will be beginning her postdoc at the Emory School of Medicine/Grady Hospital.

☺ **Victoria King** will be beginning her post-doc at UGA this year.

☺ **Dr. Beach** received the President's Award of Distinction for Team Science.

☺ **Dr. Lavner** received tenure and was awarded the Charles B. Knapp Early Career Award.

Dr. Rebecca Brock's Family Development Lab

☺ **Molly Franz** was awarded the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Presidential Graduate Fellowship and will be starting a T32 post-doctoral position at the National Center for PTSD at the VA Boston Healthcare System.

☺ **Beth Alexander** received the 2019 Donald D. Jensen Award for the best undergraduate research project conducted by a psychology major. Beth's thesis was titled "The Relationship Between Maternal PTSD and Child Internalizing Behaviors: The Influence of Parenting Stress and Social Support."

☺ **Jaime Stephenson** successfully defended her senior thesis titled "Interparental Control During Pregnancy Predicts Parental Control Directed Toward Infants."

☺ We had two undergraduate research assistants receive funding this year to support research. **Sage Volk** is currently completing a project entitled "The Role of Partner Support in the Link Between Insecure Attachment and Maternal and Paternal Depression During Pregnancy." **Olivia Maras** received funding for Summer 2019 for her project entitled "Role of Parental Eating Pathology on Child Outcomes and Parenting Practices."

Dr. Joanne Davila's Relationship Development Center

☺ Former lab member **Vickie Bhatia** took a position at the Edward Hines Jr. VA in Chicago, her hometown!

☺ Former lab members **Brian Feinstein**, **Rachel Hershenberg**, and **Lisa Starr** have been named as Rising Stars by APS!

# KUDOS!!!

We'd like to celebrate these special events in the lives of the following SIG members.  
Congratulations to you!

Dr. Brian Doss's Couples Lab at the University of Miami

☺ We are thrilled to announce that **McKenzie Roddy** will be starting her clinical internship with Baylor College of Medicine in Texas this summer.

Dr. Jean-Philippe Laurenceau's Laboratory of Interpersonal Functioning and Experiences (LIFE)

☺ **Christine Perndorfer** (third year doctoral student) matched at the Philadelphia VA Sleep Center and Behavioral Health Lab—her first choice—for clinical externship next year!

☺ **Emily Soriano** (fifth year doctoral student) was recently awarded an F31 predoctoral fellowship from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) to fund her dissertation research and training over the next two years. The title of her project is "Spouse Involvement in Everyday Type 2 Diabetes Care: Effects of Social Control on Continuously Measured Glucose."

Dr. Richard Mattson's Center for Transdisciplinary Research on Intimate Relationships (CTRoIR)

☺ **Maggie Parker** successfully defended her Master's Thesis and submitted a proposal for the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship.

☺ **Samantha Wagner** was awarded national recognition for her teaching through the Society for a Science of Clinical Psychology (SSCP).

☺ Our sibling lab, Dr. Matthew Johnson's Marriage and Family Lab welcomes new graduate student **Erin Alexander**, who, in her first year, has submitted a National Institute of Justice Dissertation Fellowship Grant.

☺ Our undergraduates have shone bright again with **Emily Bibby** receiving the Chancellor's Award of Student Excellence, and was offered a post-bac lab manager position at UNC Chapel Hill.

☺ Both **Sarah Kneebis** and **Ifeoluwa** were accepted to competitive Master's programs at Binghamton University.

☺ **Dr. Richard Mattson** was featured in *The Conversation* discussing how our genes may influence quality of marriage.

# KUDOS!!!

**We'd like to celebrate these special events in the lives of the following SIG members.  
Congratulations to you!**

Dr. Keith Renshaw's Anxiety, Stress, and Relationships Lab at George Mason University

☺ **Lauren Paige** matched with the VA West Los Angeles Medical Center for her 2019-2020 pre-doctoral internship. We'll miss her but are excited for her next step!

☺ **Sarah Giff** received an F31 award from NICHD to support her dissertation work on parenting in relation to PTSD!

Dr. Sarah Whitton's Today's Couples and Families Research Program

☺ **Lisa Godfrey**, a 3<sup>rd</sup> year graduate student, received a scholarship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to support her doctoral training and research investigating the effects of varying sexual agreements on the quality and stability of male same-sex relationships.

☺ **Neslihan James-Kangal** matched for internship at the Southwest Consortium/New Mexico VA Healthcare System (NMVAHCS).

☺ **Amanda Kuryluk** successfully defended her dissertation and graduated with her Ph.D. in December, 2018.

## **Lab Updates**

Please take some time to read about what all of the wonderful  
Couples Labs are up to.

With all your new research ideas and grant proposals brewing, please start thinking  
about your updates for the Fall 2019 Newsletter.

We'd love to hear from you!

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### **Christina Balderrama-Durbin, Ph.D.**

Director: Couple Adjustment to Stress and Trauma (CAST) Laboratory

Assistant Professor in Department of Psychology

Binghamton University – SUNY

It has been a busy and productive year in the CAST Lab! We have cleaned and prepared all the self-report, psychophysiological, and salivary data from our community study aimed at understanding and promoting couple resilience following acute stress and trauma.

CAST Lab second-year graduate students, Eileen Barden and Dana Ergas, are in the midst of completing their master's theses. Eileen is investigating physiological couple coregulation (via respiratory sinus arrhythmia) in the context of PTSD and Dana is examining stress-related growth in a community sample of sexually marginalized individuals. Third-year graduate student, Seigie Kennedy, is set to propose her dissertation this spring, she aims to explicate the impact of sexual assault on emotional and physical intimacy using an innovative multimethod approach. Alex Wang, also a third-year student, is working toward submitting his NRSA and is currently examining the moderating effects of attachment on couple coregulation following acute stress induction.

The CAST Lab is engaged in several federally funded research endeavors with military service members and Veterans including a large collaborative project investigating the unique challenges and strengths of lesbian, gay, and bisexual military couples, another longitudinal study following military couples through their first several years after joining the Air Force as well as a treatment development study designed to target comorbid PTSD and heavy drinking for Veterans in primary care. Finally, this fall we plan to launch a pilot project examining couple-level minority stress and barriers to couple therapy help-seeking for community couples who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. A big thank you to our extraordinary 2018-2019 CAST lab team! We look forward to publishing our findings and welcoming another large team of bright undergraduate research assistants into the lab in the fall!



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**Donald Baucom, Ph.D.**

Director: UNC Couples Lab

Richard Lee Simpson Distinguished Professor of Psychology  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Dr. Baucom is continuing his collaboration with the National Health Service to offer training to therapists to provide couple-based interventions for couples in which one partner is depressed. This is part of England's nationwide IAPT program to provide empirically-supported interventions to the public. In addition to providing clinical services, these efforts will result in a large scale effectiveness treatment study of couple-based treatment for depression in routine outpatient clinics around the country.

Dr. Baucom and lab alumna Dr. Melanie Fischer, along with Drs. Sarah Corrie and Michael T. Worrell, have completed their latest book on Cognitive-Behavioral Couple Therapy (CBCT). Covering the basic empirical and conceptual aspects of the model, along with descriptions of how CBCT can be used in the treatment of psychopathology and long-term health conditions, this volume will be the most comprehensive to date on CBCT. In fact, it is set to replace the principle textbook on CBCT originally published by Epstein and Baucom in 2002. The new text is scheduled to be released later this year.

Our lab continues to explore interpersonal emotion regulation by examining couple conversations using dynamic systems modeling and other intensive time series methods. We have been interested in vocal features of emotional arousal within multiple populations of couples, including couples where one member has significant psychopathology, couples with histories of intimate partner violence, and couples in a longitudinal study of relationship functioning. We are currently working on multiple projects at various stages.

We currently have a new project examining long-distance relationships. We are actively recruiting community couples in long-distance relationships as well as couples who live in the same geographic location. We are interested in exploring times of transitions within these couples; that is, when partners transition from functioning individually versus times when the couple is together

The entire lab is assisting in efforts supporting Kim Pentel's dissertation project titled ACCESS (Affirming Couples Counseling to Engage Same-Sex Partners). ACCESS is a cognitive-behavioral couple therapy tailored specifically for same-sex female couples. The 10-session ACCESS treatment manual has been developed, a team of doctoral-student therapists trained, and an open trial pilot study is currently underway.

We are working in collaboration with the UNC Center for Excellence in Eating Disorders to conduct an effectiveness study comparing individual- and couple-based treatments for binge eating disorder. Recruitment is underway.

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**Rebecca Brock, Ph.D.**

Director: Family Development Lab

Assistant Professor in Department of Psychology  
University of Nebraska – Lincoln

We are continuing our large-scale longitudinal study of families navigating the transition into parenthood and early childhood. The primary aim of *The Family Development Project* is to understand the role of family processes in both adult and child psychopathology. In particular, we are investigating how functioning in the interparental (couple) relationship during pregnancy sets the stage for functioning in the family after childbirth, ultimately impacting the health and well-being of each family member. Families (N=159) completed

assessments during pregnancy, at 1 month postpartum, at 6 months postpartum, and when the infant turned 1 year of age. We are currently completing a toddler-age assessment. We recently received funding for a preschool-age visit to investigate the role of family relationships in the early development of executive functioning. For more information, check out the study website:

<https://familydevelopmentlab.wixsite.com/familyproject>.



Here we are at our fall 2018 lab party. We are welcoming a new graduate student, Eric Phillips, to the lab this upcoming fall! To learn more about the team, visit: <https://psychology.unl.edu/family-development-lab/meet-team>.

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### **James V. Cordova, Ph.D.**

Director: Center for Couples and Families  
Professor and Chair in Department of Psychology  
Clark University

James Cordova is working on disseminating and implementing the Relationship Checkup for a wider range of couples. In collaboration with Dr. Cigrang and his Air Force team, we are wrapping up an RCT adapting the Checkup for military couples in a primary care setting. Dr. Cordova is also in the process of testing an online platform for the Checkup, allowing couples in any geographical region easy access to a well-trained Checkup clinician.

Justin Laplante is finishing his dissertation on the influences of meditation on romantic relationship, and teaching a global project-based applied learning course. He is also collaborating on a paper investigating the impact of meditation on social interactions. Emily Maher continues to work on the lab's current grant, disseminating the Checkup among US Airmen and their partners. She is working on her dissertation, which will examine the utility of a brief mindfulness intervention among postpartum women. She will apply to internship in the fall. Taylor Dovala is finishing up work at her clinical externship at Rhode Island Hospital. She is continuing to work on her dissertation, evaluating an LGB-affirmative adaptation of The Relationship Checkup. She will be applying for internship in the fall. Nick Canby is currently doing his practicum at UMASS medical school counseling center and couple therapy at Clark. He is writing up his Master's research on mindfulness, perceptions of empathy, and comfort with vulnerability. He is also currently finishing papers on the influence of social factors in mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT),

predictors of home meditation practice minutes in MBCT, and the role of the teacher in mindfulness-based interventions. Setareh Rossman is currently collecting data for a qualitative research study examining relational spirituality among nonreligious married adults. She is looking forward to starting her couples therapy practicum this fall. David Yoo is the newest member of the lab! Before coming to Clark, he worked as a pediatric hospice chaplain and a trauma/psychiatric chaplain. David's research interests revolve around authentic communications between emerging adults and their parents.

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**Joanne Davila, Ph.D.**

Director: Relationship Development Center  
Professor in Department of Psychology  
Stony Brook University

The Relationship Development Center continues its work on romantic relationships and well-being. We continue to be involved in a number of projects and collaborations, including: (1) ongoing data collection on romantic competence among emerging adults, (2) the development and evaluation of a relationship education program for college students, and its adaptation to different populations using a variety of formats, (3) the study of LGBTQ individuals' identity, health, and relationship experiences and (4) the study of diverse relationship types. We also have ongoing collaborations including research on romantic relationships among individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, as well as associations between romantic functioning and mental health.

We now have four PhD students: Jiaqi Zhou (currently in her 4th year), Ellora Vilkin, Howard Huang, and T.J. Sullivan (co-advised by Dan O'Leary), all finishing up their first year. They are all actively working on lab projects, as well as developing their own lines of research.

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**Brian Doss, Ph.D.**

Director: Couples Lab  
Associate Professor of Psychology  
University of Miami

We have successfully translated the OurRelationship program to Spanish and are now actively enrolling and treating Spanish-speaking low-income couples.

We presented our Phase 1 analyses for our ACF-funded grant delivering the OurRelationship and ePREP programs to 742 low-income couples at this year's ABCT. Results show that both interventions showed significant, medium-sized improvement relative to WL control in all four relationship outcome domains (satisfaction, conflict, communication skills, and relationship knowledge), with few significant differences between intervention groups. Additionally, the programs created significant, small-sized effects on individual functioning (psychological distress, perceived stress, anger, perceived health, and insomnia). Intervention effects on both relationship and individual functioning were generally maintained over 6-month follow up.

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**Jean-Philippe Laurenceau, Ph.D.**

Director: Laboratory of Interpersonal Functioning and Experiences (LIFE)  
Professor and Chair in Department of Psychology  
University of Delaware

Our current major project is an intensive longitudinal investigation of stress, relationship functioning, health behaviors, and glycemic control in patients with type 2 diabetes and their spouses/partners. We recently completed data collection for this year-long study and are currently analyzing the data and writing up initial findings.

In addition, we are in the midst of analyzing data and writing up findings from our recently completed longitudinal study on fear of cancer recurrence in breast cancer patients and their spouses/partners. Looking ahead, we are planning our next grant submission to continue our work in this area.

We are excited to welcome a new doctoral student, Ovsanna Balian, from CSUN, to the LIFE lab this fall!

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### **Steven Beach, Ph.D. & Justin Lavner, Ph.D.**

Directors: UGA Couple and Family Lifespan Health Lab  
Professors in Department of Psychology  
University of Georgia

The lab has been working on several projects aimed at understanding and promoting health among rural African American families. This includes a new follow-up of middle-aged couples who participated in the ProSAAF intervention to examine longer-term impact on relationship functioning and health (PI: Beach; R01AG059260-06) and an ongoing RCT examining a responsive parenting intervention for first-time mothers and their infants (PIs: Lavner and Birch; R01DK112874). In addition, Dr. Beach is continuing to examine biomarkers and health among African Americans (R01CA220254 and R01HD080749) and Dr. Lavner has been continuing to pursue his interests in how and why relationship dynamics change over time and in LGB family functioning.

New graduate students are Ariel Hart (first year) and Tosin Adesogan (incoming), who join Tony Petruzzella (fourth year) and Lauren VanderBroek Stice (6th year on internship). Also working with the lab is an interdisciplinary group of researchers at UGA including Man Kit Lei (Assistant Professor of Sociology), Allen Barton (Research Scientist), Victoria King (post-doctoral), Mei Ling Ong (Statistician), as well as several regular off-campus collaborators.

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### **Erika Lawrence, Ph.D.**

Director: Translational Science at The Family Institute  
Northwestern University

The Couple and Family Development Lab headed by Dr. Erika Lawrence has been making many strides at building a robust research branch at The Family Institute at Northwestern University. Within the lab, there are three lines of research currently taking place. The first is replicating and extending an effectiveness trial of a novel violence intervention (ACTV). ACTV was adapted from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and has been shown to significantly reduce aggression and one-year recidivism rates among intimate partner violence (IPV). Due to these findings, Iowa was the first state to employ ACTV as a statewide, court-mandated, empirically supported intervention for IPV.

The second line of research is testing the effectiveness of a novel prevention program that is tailored to couples' specific needs. Five different areas of couple functioning will be assessed using the Relationship Quality Interview (RQI), which provides objective ratings based on behavioral exemplars of each domain. Couples will then attend workshops only for those domains/skills that received lower objective ratings by

interviewers. The lab is currently finalizing workshop manuals and will begin pilot testing the workshops this summer.

Lastly, the lab is exploring assumptions about how couples function in minority populations. Most of what we know about couple functioning and how best to help couples comes from research with White, non-Hispanic, heterosexual, married, middle-class couples. Our goal is to understand whether and how to adapt conceptual models and interventions for minority populations. We are in Year 3 of a 5-year study with Mexican American couples. The lab plans to extend the project with SGM and African American couples in the future.

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**Richard E. Mattson, Ph.D.**

Director: Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Intimate Relationships (CTRoIR)  
Associate Professor in Department of Psychology  
Binghamton University

Our lab continues to analyze data from the Individual and Well Being Study utilizing both the biological measures obtained and other subjective measures. These analyses have resulted in two manuscripts, one published (Mattson, Cameron, Middleton, Starr, Davila & Johnson, 2018) and one under review (Wagner, Mattson, Davila, Johnson & Cameron, under review). The graduate students in the lab have continued to make significant progress in their individual projects focused on sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and marital quality. Our undergraduate research assistants continue to be an irreplaceable asset to the team with many of them presenting thoughtful research projects at local and national conferences. Further, two of our undergraduates, Bridget Jules and Emily Ives, will be working on their own research topics supported by Binghamton University undergraduate research grants.

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**Uzma Rehman, Ph.D.**

Director: Relationship & Sexuality Research Lab  
Associate Professor of Psychology  
University of Waterloo

We are currently working on several projects that examine the intersection of relationship processes and human sexuality. In one set of studies, we are examining whether low sexual desire in women is better conceptualized a single phenomenon or whether there are distinct subtypes of low sexual desire in women. We are also investigating the attributions that partners make of sexual behaviours such a pornography use. Related to both of these projects, a focus of our research is to identify and understand the emotional barriers to sexual communication. That is, what factors present individuals from discussing their sexual preferences and negotiating a mutually pleasurable sexual repertoire.

Our research is funded by a federal grant from the Canadian government, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

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**Keith Renshaw, Ph.D.**

Director: Anxiety, Stress, and Relationships Lab  
Associate Professor and Chair in Department of Psychology  
George Mason University

Our lab is growing and shrinking – Laura Martin will join us as a new doctoral student in the Fall, while Lauren Paige heads off to internship this summer (more in “Kudos” below). Lauren Paige has also begun data collection for her dissertation examining the role of PTSD knowledge as a protective factor in veteran psychosocial functioning, as well as the impact of PTSD symptom severity on daily vs. global assessment of psychosocial functioning. We have other projects that are in the formation stages. In collaboration with Sarah Bannon, a doctoral student at SUNY Stony Brook and soon-to-be-intern at MGH (congratulations!), we are working on a new data collection focused on couples relationships after a traumatic brain injury. Also, Sarah Giff is preparing for a large-scale coding effort of parenting in relation to PTSD, in collaboration with Abi Gewirtz at the University of Minnesota.

Finally, in a departure from our usual focus, Dr. Renshaw recently visited Lahore, Pakistan, where he conducted a workshop on a principle-based approach to CBT and delivered a talk on post-trauma prevention in a conference sponsored by the Institute of Clinical Psychology at the University of Management and Technology. The students and faculty at the conference were incredibly welcoming and very committed to providing quality clinical services and training. Our lab may begin a broader collaboration with that program and other programs in Pakistan, as they look to increase the reach of clinical psychology in addressing mental health issues in that country.



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### **Sarah Whitton, Ph.D.**

Director: The Today's Couples and Families Research Program  
Associate Professor of Psychology  
University of Cincinnati

We continue to be busy with FAB400, our NICHD-funded 5-year longitudinal study of sexual and gender minority youth assigned female at birth (SGM-AFAB), conducted in collaboration with the Northwestern Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health and Wellbeing. We are proud to say that we have over 95% retention of our sample (N = 488) through wave 4, and wave 5 is well underway. Some accomplishments to date: we have developed and psychometrically validated three culturally sensitive measures of IPV for sexual and gender minorities. Using those measures, we have documented high rates of intimate partner violence in this population, which is predominantly bidirectional between partners, more prevalent among Black and Latinx than White participants, and associated with experienced stigma based on both race and sexual orientation identity. On a lighter note, we found evidence to debunk myths that female same-sex couples have less sex and less satisfying sex than male-female couples. Among the cisgender women in our sample, those

in same-sex relationships (with cisgender women) reported higher duration of sex, frequency of orgasm, and sexual satisfaction than those in different-sex relationships (with cisgender men). See our publications below for more details.

In collaboration with Sherry Rostosky of the University of Kentucky, we adapted the Strengthening Same Sex Relationships Program, Female version (SSSR-F) into an online program for Appalachian female same-sex couples, called Better Together. This year we are piloting it with 40 couples to assess feasibility, acceptability, and efficacy in improving relationship quality and dyadic coping with minority stress.

Graduate student Neslihan James-Kangal has launched a study exploring relational ambiguity in young adults' undefined romantic and sexual relationships, including how to best measure relational ambiguity and its associations with emotional wellbeing.

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## ***HOT off the Press***

### *In Press and Recently Published Literature*

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- Allen, E.S., Grolnick, W.S., & Cordova, J.V. (2019). Evaluating a self-determination theory-based preventative parenting consultation: The Parent Check-In. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, doi: 10.1007/s10826-018-01309-0
- Barton, A. W., Beach, S. R. H., Bryant, C. M., Lavner, J. A., & Brody, G. H. (2018). Stress spillover, African Americans' couple and health outcomes, and the stress-buffering effect of family-centered prevention. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 32, 186–196. doi:10.1037/fam0000376
- Barton, A. W., Beach, S. R. H., Wells, A. C., Ingels, J. B., Corso, P. S., Sperr, M. C., Anderson, T. N., Brody, G. H. (2018). The Protecting Strong African American Families Program: A randomized controlled trial with rural African American couples. *Prevention Science*, 7, 904–913. doi:10.1007/s11121-018-0895-4
- Beach, S. R. H., Lei, M. K., Simons, R. L., Barr, A. B., Simons, L. G., Cutrona, C. E., Philibert, R. A. (in press). Perceived relationship support moderates the association of contextual stress with inflammation among African Americans. *Journal of Family Psychology*. doi:10.1037/fam0000509
- Bergman, J., Renshaw, K.D., & Paige, L. (in press). Psychological well-being in Iraq and Afghanistan veterans: Risk and protective factors. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*. doi:10.1037/tra0000416
- Bricker-Carter, S. P., Giff, S. T., Campbell, S. B., & Renshaw, K. D. (in press). Supporting a spouse with military posttraumatic stress: Daily associations with partners' affect. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*. Advanced online publication. doi: 10.1002/jts.22390
- Bricker-Carter, S., Renshaw, K. D., Allen, E. S., Markman, H. J., & Stanley, S. M. (in press). Everything here is fine: Protective buffering by military spouses during a deployment. *Family Process*.
- Bricker-Carter, S., Renshaw, K. D., Allen, E. S., Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H. J. (in press). Protective buffering by service members during military deployments: Associations with psychological distress and relationship functioning. *Family Process*.
- Brock, R. L., Franz, M., O'Bleness, J., & Lawrence, E. (in press). The dynamic interplay between satisfaction with intimate relationship functioning and daily mood in low-income outpatients. *Family Process*. Advance Online Publication. doi: 10.1111/famp.12402
- Brock, R. L., & Kochanska, G. (in press). Anger in infancy and its implications: History of attachment in mother-child and father-child relationships as a moderator of risk. *Development and Psychopathology*. Advance Online Publication. doi: 10.1017/S0954579418000780
- Campbell, S. B., & Renshaw, K. D. (in press). Daily PTSD symptom accommodation and relationship functioning in military couples. *Family Process*.
- Campbell, S. B., & Renshaw, K. D. (2018). Posttraumatic stress disorder and relationship functioning: A comprehensive review and organizational framework. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 65, 152-162.
- Cohen, M., Pentel, K. Z., Boeding, S., Baucom, D. H. (2019). Postpartum role satisfaction in couples: Associations with individual and relationship well-being. *Journal of Family Issues*.
- Davila, J., Jabbour, J., Dyar, C., & Feinstein, B. A. (2019). Bi+ visibility: Characteristics of those who attempt to make their bisexual+ identity visible and the strategies they use. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 48, 199-211. DOI: 10.1007/s10508-018-1284-6
- DiMauro, J., & Renshaw, K. D. (in press). Trauma-related disclosure in sexual assault survivors' intimate relationships: Associations with PTSD, shame, and partners' responses. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.
- DiMauro, J., & Renshaw, K. D. (in press). PTSD and relationship satisfaction in female survivors of sexual assault: The roles of sexuality, communication, and hostility. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, & Policy*.
- Doss, B. D., Roddy, M. K., Nowlan, K. M., Rothman, K., & Christensen, A. (2019). Maintenance of gains in relationship and individual functioning following the online OurRelationship program. *Behavior Therapy*, 50, 73-86. doi: 10.1016/j.beth.2018.03.011
- Dovala, T., Hawrilenko, M., & Cordova, J. (2018). Implicit Theories of Relationships and Conflict Communication Patterns in Romantic Relationships: A Dyadic Perspective. *Journal of Relationships Research*, 9, E11. doi:10.1017/jrr.2018.11
- Dyar, C., Feinstein, B. A., & Davila, J. (2019). Development and validation of a brief version of the Anti-Bisexual Experiences Scale. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 48, 175-189. doi:10.1007/s105
- Dyar, C., Messinger, A. M., Newcomb, M. E., Byck, G. R., Dunlap, P., & Whitton, S.W. (in press). Development and initial validation of three culturally-sensitive measures of intimate partner violence for sexual and gender minority populations. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.
- Dyar, C. Newcomb, M.E., Mustanski, B., & Whitton, S.W. (in press). A structural equation model of sexual satisfaction and relationship functioning among sexual and gender minority

individuals female assigned at birth in diverse relationships. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*.

Feinstein, B. A., Bettin, E., Swann, G., Macapagal, K. R., Whitton, S. W., & Newcomb, M. E. (2018). The influence of internalized stigma on the efficacy of an HIV prevention and relationship education program for young male couples. *AIDS and Behavior*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-018-2093-6>

Feinstein, B. A., Dyar, C., Li, D. H., Whitton, S. W., Newcomb, M. E., & Mustanski, B. (2018). The longitudinal associations between outness and health outcomes among gay/lesbian versus bisexual emerging adults. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. doi: 10.1007/s10508-018-1221-8

Fredman, S. J., Le, Y., Marshall, A. D., Garcia Hernandez, W., Feinberg, M. E., & Ammerman, R. T. (2019). Parent PTSD symptoms and child abuse potential during the perinatal period: Direct associations and mediation via relationship conflict. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 90 66-75.

Georgia Salivar, E., Roddy, M.K., Nowlan, K.M., & Doss, B.D. (in press) Effectiveness of OurRelationship program for underserved couples. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*.

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