

# INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS SIG

SPRING 2025

[HTTPS://ABCTCOUPLES.ORG/](https://abctcouples.org/)

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## CURRENT OFFICERS

**Co-Leaders** - Sarah Carter & Jasara Hogan

**Student Co-Leaders** - Emily Bibby & Melissa Gates

**Treasurer** - Yuning Annie Le

**DEI Committee** - Jessica Hill, Alikea Kuzya, Michelle Ramos, & Lauren Simpson

**Media Coordinators** - Alyssa Miville & Triston Li

**Newsletter Editors** - Quinn Hendershot and John V. Miller

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# OFFICER UPDATES

## **Letter from Your SIG Co-Leaders Drs. Sarah Carter and Jasara Hogan**

### **Hello and welcome from your co-leaders!**

Hello to the newly minted Intimate Relationships Research and Treatment SIG! We're excited to begin our tenure as your Couples SIG co-leaders and are incredibly grateful to Kayla Knopp and Shelby Scott for their thoughtful leadership and tireless work.

### **Welcome New Officers!**

We are delighted to welcome several new SIG officers, including Student Co-Leader Emily Bibby, Media Coordinator, Alyssa Miville, Newsletter Co-Editor John V. Miller, DEI Committee members Lauren Simpson and Alika Tsytsurina. Thank you all for your support to our SIG over the coming years!

### **Website Updates**


Our SIG website has been updated to reflect our new name change. Our new website address is [www.abctrelationships.com](http://www.abctrelationships.com). We have also kept our previous domain, [www.abctcouples.org](http://www.abctcouples.org), which will remain active for the next year and will redirect to our new site to give folks a chance to adjust to the new address. We will make a similar update to our SIG email address soon. We will make sure to give plenty of notice and also have a period where the two addresses overlap so that we don't miss anyone's email.

### **Dues**

ABCT will move toward a centralized system of collecting dues and distributing them to the SIGs. The dues will most likely be collected when renewing your annual ABCT membership. ABCT leadership are still working through the details of this process but they are hoping to make this change before our next meeting.

### **ABCT 2024 Convention Updates**

It was wonderful to see everyone in Philadelphia at last November's ABCT convention and SIG Business Meeting. Congratulations to Christina Balderrama-Durbin, our Early Career Award winner! And congratulations to this year's Robert L. Weiss Student Poster Awardees: Lauren Lafur (1st), Emily Bibby (2nd), and Jenny Lee (Honorable Mention). We're so proud of all the incredible work shared this year. We are immensely grateful to the volunteers on each of those awards committees.



It was wonderful to see the SIG represented at our two sponsored symposia. As usual, the symposia represented our SIG well and there was a fantastic turn out. We also offer a special thank you to Kaitlin Brunett & Melissa Gates for organizing a fantastic pre-conference event. The student mentorship program paired 14 mentor-mentee dyads this year. We appreciate the mentors who provided their time and support.

### **ABCT 2025 Convention Planning**

Submissions are in for ABCT's 2025 convention that will take place in New Orleans this November. As you likely noticed with the changes to the submission process, there are several proposed changes related to the 2025 meeting. We've rounded them up below:

#### **Conference Format Changes Ahead!**

Big changes are coming to ABCT's conference structure starting in 2025. All of these changes are meant to increase cohesion and inclusion within ABCT, but they may take some adjusting. We had a recent meeting with all SIG leaders and the ABCT president to discuss these changes. During the meeting, the ABCT President acknowledged that these major changes weren't communicated earlier in the planning process and issued an apology. As many of these changes were made without SIG input, there may be additional changes incorporating SIG feedback. Here's what you need to know for now:

- **Changes to Submission Process:** ABCT is moving away from symposia and toward single-talk submissions. This change is designed to reduce barriers for early career scholars and those without established networks. As many of you likely saw, oral presentations will follow the best practice of being submitted as standalone talks. The program committee will group related talks into sessions. ABCT anticipates that the total number of accepted symposia will be reduced from 150 to 75, depending on conference space. Around 40 of these symposia are likely to be SIG-sponsored.
- **SIG Business Meeting Times:** During the 2026 conference, SIG meetings will happen during two designated time blocks. The upside is that these meetings will no longer compete with regular conference programming. The tradeoff is that SIGs will be scheduled against each other, and attendees may need to choose between SIG meetings.
- **Expo Moving to Thursday:** The traditional Friday night expo which showcases posters from the different SIGs will now take place on Thursday evening as a kickoff reception. This change would mean that we can no longer have a pre-conference event on the Thursday evening before the conference starts. There was a significant amount of feedback from SIG leaders suggesting that this change would create hardships for members who would now need to travel earlier than usual to attend or present at the event and would interfere with longstanding pre-conference traditions for many SIGs. There is a possibility that this plan will be altered such that there will be a welcome event on Thursday night and the SIG expo will continue on Friday night.

## Letter from Your SIG Student Co-Leaders

Emily Bibby & Melissa Gates

We are so honored and excited to serve as your student co-leaders this upcoming year. We enjoyed connecting with many of you at ABCT in Philadelphia and look forward to seeing everyone in New Orleans this year!

### *Student/Trainee Symposium:*

Thank you to all the students who submitted to the symposium and for their hard work putting together their abstracts and speaker materials. This symposium will consist of four talks identifying the factors and mechanisms that influence intimate relationship outcomes. Aligning with this year's theme, the presentations will underscore the importance of promoting inclusion in intimate relationship research through assessment selection and modification, the integration of identity (e.g., sexual identity), culture (e.g., religion), and critical contextual factors (e.g., stress, substance use) into treatment, as well as suggested approaches for tailoring evidence-based treatments accordingly. We are really excited by this potential symposium and hope the reviewers are too!

Moving forward, we would like to change the student symposium's name to "trainee symposium" to be clearer and more inclusive of post-baccalaureate members and those on internship who also wish to submit. We plan to discuss this more in our next SIG meeting.

Emily Bibby (emily.bibby@stonybrook.edu)  
Melissa Gates (mgates5@binghamton.edu)





## Letter from the Treasurer

Yunying (Annie) Le

HHello SIG Members!

This is my first update as your Treasurer. If we haven't had a chance to meet, my name is Yunying Le and I go by Annie. I hope to meet you at future meetings!

An update on our membership status and dues:

- We have 191 active members (99 professional, 92 students).
- Our current balance is \$5,797. Since I assume my role in January 2025, I have collected \$40 in dues and paid out for website subscription (\$186).
- The Underrepresented Scholar Fund has a balance of \$1,500. Since I assume my role in January 2025, I have collected \$5 from dues and directed donations towards this fund.

A reminder that it is not too late to pay dues for the 2024-2025 academic year. Dues are \$30 for professional members and \$5 for students, first-year post-docs, and retired members. For every professional membership, \$5 of dues automatically goes toward the Intimate Relationships SIG Underrepresented Scholars Fund.

Please complete the membership form <https://forms.gle/3xustNBLzbfApjgT8> and send your dues electronically via Venmo (send payment to @Yunying-Le) or via PayPal (send to yunyingleannie@gmail.com). It is important to designate the payment as "Send to friends and family" to avoid processing fees. For all dues, indicate "ABCT Intimate Relationships SIG" in the note.

Please don't hesitate to contact me ([yunying.le@du.edu](mailto:yunying.le@du.edu)) with any questions or concerns about dues or membership.

My best,  
Annie

Yunying (Annie) Le, PhD



YUNYING LE  
@YUNYING-LE



SEND YOUR DUES USING THESE QR CODES!



## Letter from the DEI Committee

Hello from your IR SIG DEI Committee!

We look forward to continuing our work to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the SIG over the coming year.

We recently selected 4 diversity-focused individual oral paper presentations for SIG sponsorship this year. This is a new format that ABCT is piloting for the upcoming convention, with the goal of increasing inclusivity by expanding opportunities for researchers to present their work regardless of their network or ability to fit into a broader symposium theme. We hope that these impactful IR projects will be accepted; we can't wait to share the exciting news with you!

We are also requesting donations for the Underrepresented Scholars Fund for our next cycle of awards. The IR SIG recognizes that our field is stronger when all voices are represented, and we are committed to increasing diversity within our field.

We know that the cost of applying to graduate school or internship programs and networking at conferences is a significant barrier to entry within our field, particularly for young scholars from minoritized backgrounds, and we created the Underrepresented Scholars Fund to help close the gap. This fund is open to all students and potential students from underrepresented groups (broadly defined) to cover any costs associated with getting into graduate school, getting through graduate school, and internship.

We were able to fund 3 scholars in our inaugural cycle in 2023! We will be accepting applications again in August for the next cycle and would love to be able to help as many scholars as possible. Please consider donating to this important cause - any amount helps! Email us at [underrepresentedscholarsfund@gmail.com](mailto:underrepresentedscholarsfund@gmail.com) with any questions.

All donations can be sent to the Treasurer, Yunying (Annie) Le via Venmo (send payment to @Yunying-Le) or via PayPal.com (send to [yunyingleannie@gmail.com](mailto:yunyingleannie@gmail.com)). It is important to designate the payment as "send to friends and family" to avoid processing fees. Please include USF in the description.

Thank you,  
Jessica Hill, Alika Kuzya, Michelle Ramos, and Lauren Simpson

# KUDOS

## **Lab Name: The Couples Lab at Nova Southeastern University**

### **Head of Lab: Emily Georgia, PhD**

Internship Match: Madeline Jubran successfully matched at the University of Florida Counseling & Wellness Center for her predoctoral internship, where she looks forward to expanding her clinical experience in a university counseling setting while further developing an area of concentration in couples therapy.

## **Lab Name: Behavioral Health Innovation and Dissemination Center (BHIDC)**

### **Head of Lab: Drs. Brian Baucom and Feea Leifker**

Dr. Baucom and Dr. Leifker received an award from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Utah for their work Advancing Access and Connecting Communities through the BHIDC. Robyn Kilshaw will be heading off to internship this summer at the Ohio State University's Suicide and Trauma Reduction Initiative program

## **Lab Name: The Today's Couples and Families Research Program**

### **Head of Lab: Sarah Whitton**

Abby Fischbach, a first-year clinical psychology doctoral student, was selected for the prestigious NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program.

Emily Devlin was awarded two grants to support her dissertation: A Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues Grant-in-Aid and a University of Cincinnati Seeman's Funds grant.

Charlie Giraud received a University of Cincinnati Seeman's Funds grant for a qualitative study of how medical gender transitions affect romantic relationships, from the transitioning individual's and the romantic partner's perspectives.

## **Lab Name: Marriage and Family Lab**

### **Head of Lab: Matthew D. Johnson, PhD**

Quinn Hendershot matched with the Phoenix VA, PTSD/Mental Health track, for her internship year!

Quinn also received Binghamton University's Graduate Award for Excellence in Research!

## **Lab Name: The Center for Transdisciplinary Research on Intimate Relationships**

### **Head of Lab: Rich Mattson, PhD**

Allison McKinnon successfully defended her dissertation, passing with no revisions!



Quinn receiving her award



# LAB UPDATES

## **Lab Name: The Couples Lab at Nova Southeastern University**

**Head of Lab: Emily Georgia, PhD**

Our lab continues to explore relationship dynamics, with a focus on how couples navigate conflict, communication, and relational well-being in diverse contexts.

We are currently analyzing data on the effectiveness of the OurRelationship program, identifying which core issues benefit most from the intervention.

Our research also examines older adults' experiences in the OurRelationship program, exploring how relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution change later in life.

Another ongoing project investigates weight bias in couple dynamics, examining how weight-related perceptions and stigma impact relationship satisfaction and communication.

## **Lab Name: Behavioral Health Innovation and Dissemination Center (BHIDC)**

**Head of Lab: Drs. Brian Baucom and Feea Leifker**

We're finishing our 4th year as a center at the University of Utah. It's been a pleasure working with trainees from a variety of training programs to help them learn evidence-based couple therapies (and CBT more generally). Our third cohort of trainees includes students from the U of U's Clinical Psychology doctoral program, Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse Practitioner doctoral program, Masters of Social Work program, and Psychiatry residents. We have two new satellite locations serving refugee and primarily underserved community members, allowing us to provide mental health care and couple therapy to underserved populations.

This year, our lab welcomed two new grad students: Stevie Shock and Anaïs D'oelsnitz, who both joined the lab in August. Emily Spargo, second year graduate student, successfully proposed her Master's thesis.





# LAB UPDATES

**Lab Name: Clinical Couple and Family Psychology, Department of Psychology, University of Marburg, Germany**  
**Head of Lab: Melanie Fischer, Ph.D.**

Our research foci include psychopathology in couples and families (basic and intervention research) as well as topics related to couple relationships more broadly (understanding, preventing, and treating relationship distress). Current doctoral students are Sophie Blum, M.Sc. (research focus on OCD and parenthood), Negin Boryri, M.Sc. (couple communication and observational methods), Anne Vogel, M.Sc. (couple relationships among sexual minorities), Laura Weber, M.Sc. (family accommodation in OCD and other disorders), and Nina Winkelmann, M.Sc. (depression in couples and network analyses), along with a number of students completing their undergraduate and Master's theses in our lab.

Current projects focus on accommodation and emotion regulation in couples with OCD, the evaluation of an online training for parents considering separation, a randomized-controlled trial of couple-based CBT with a focus on changes in dynamic networks of symptoms and interpersonal factors, observational coding of couple communication, the utilization of large scale panel data to study couple relationships of sexual minorities, along with other ongoing research efforts and collaborations. Dr. Fischer continues her dissemination efforts for couple therapy for depression in the National Health Service, England.

We will not be traveling to ABCT in 2025 but hope to see everyone in 2026!

**Lab Name: The Today's Couples and Families Research Program**  
**Head of Lab: Sarah Whitton**

On March 24th, 2025 our 5-year R01 supporting FAB400, a longitudinal cohort study of sexual minority women focused on mental health and relationships, was terminated by the Trump administration. That same week several grants supporting our collaborations, such as clinical trials of a relationship education approach to preventing HIV risk, were also terminated. Consequently, much of our research is on pause as we scramble to find employment for our study staff, appeal the (illegal) terminations, seek alternate funding, notify and provide resources to our participants to whom we had promised continued engagement and financial compensation through 2028, and try to close out the projects in a way that will best preserve the data we collected up to this date.

# HOT OFF THE PRESS

Brochu, P.M, Georgia, E., Jubran, M. ...Roddy, M.K., (*Under review*). Associations between weight stigma and mental well-being among people in romantic relationships: An actor-partner interdependence model investigation.

Chapman, C.L., Liu, D.L., Stanley, S.M., & Rhoades, G.K. (in press). Thinking about Moving in Together? Reasons for Cohabitation are Associated with Relationship Outcomes Over Time. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*.

Fischer, M. S. & Baucom, D. H. (in press). Paarbezogene Interventionen in der Psychotherapie [Couple-based interventions in psychotherapy]. *Hogrefe*.

Giraud, C., Newcomb, M. E., & Whitton, S.W. (2025). An evaluation of resilience as a protective factor for mental health among sexual and gender minorities. *LGBT Health*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1089/lgbt.2024.0135>

Hirlemann, A., Jubran, M., Georgia, E., & Doss, B. (*in press*). A mixed-methods instrumental collective case study of the OurRelationship program. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*.

Jubran, M., Wang, N., Hartman, A., & Georgia, E. (2025). Our love language: A systematic review of the association between observed couple communication and relationship satisfaction. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cfp0000280>

Newcomb, M. E., Swann, G., Addington, E. L., Macapagal, K., Moskowitz, J. T., Sarno, E. L., Whitton, S. W., & Mustanski, B. (2025). Randomized controlled trial of a relationship education and HIV prevention program for young male couples: Biomedical and behavioral outcomes. *Health Psychology, 44* (3), 297-309. doi: 10.1037/hea0001448

Rostosky, S. S., Whitton, S.W., Clements, Z. Jensen, K., Robbins, S. & Dugan, A. (2025). Better Together Online: A pilot study of a relationship education intervention with rural female couples. *Professional Psychology, Research and Practice, 56*(2), 119-125. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pro0000610>

Wegner, L., Sarno, E., Newcomb, M.E., & Whitton, S.W. (2025). Understanding the association between medical mistrust and unmet medical care need in gender and sexually diverse people of color assigned female at birth. *LGBT Health, 12* (3), 176-182.

Whitton, S.W., Scheer, J.R., Devlin, E. A., Lawlace, M. & Newcomb, M. E. (2025). Contexts and motives of intimate partner violence among sexual and gender minority young adults assigned female at birth. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000814>

# OPPORTUNITIES TO HIGHLIGHT

**Lab Name: The Today's Couples and Families Research Program**  
**Head of Lab: Sarah Whitton**

We have a large amount of data on the romantic relationships of sexual and gender minority (SGM) people. If you are interested in SGM relationships but don't have access to data on the topic, please reach out. Over the past decade students, postdocs, and early career faculty from various universities and labs involved in the Couples SIG have used our data to gain experience and establish a publication record in this understudied area. With the recent terminations of many SGM Health-focused training grants, I'm particularly invested in providing this sort of informal training to any early career scientists so that the field of SGM Health research can persist.



*"Mark, can you see how the tin foil hat might make Zurg feel as though you're shutting her out?"*