

## COUPLES RESEARCH AND THERAPY

## https://abctcouples.org/

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A Newsletter brought to you by the ABCT Couples SIG, Spring 2021

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## **Letter from the Editors**

We are delighted to share with you the Spring 2021 edition of the ABCT Couples SIG Newsletter! This is especially true as we do so via our new mailing list <a href="mailto:abctcouplessig@googlegroups.com">abctcouplessig@googlegroups.com</a>. Moving forward, please use this address to post to the listserv.

We would like to thank all of the labs who submitted updates and to our media coordinators for setting up the new listserv!

In addition to lab updates, kudos, and "hot off the press" publications, we are pleased to highlight our featured article, "The Black Lives Matter Movement: A Call to Action for Couple and Family Therapists." We believe this work exemplifies the critical yet challenging work that lays ahead in effectively working with BIPOC clients and communities while simultaneously working to dismantle systemic racism in our various professional roles and as a community of colleagues. We hope that this article can serve as an important resource in expanding the reach and impact of our field.

Additionally, the newsletter features comments from our new faculty co-leaders, **Drs. Hannah Williamson and Emily Georgia Salivar** (pg. 2) who discuss important information about their new positions, and provide several relevant updates about the SIG. Also included are updates from SIG student co-leaders, **Karena Leo and Jessica Kansky** (pg. 3), who discuss the upcoming November convention, as well as an update from our treasure, **Dr. Michelle Ramos** (pg. 3) who discusses current business and membership information.

We look forward to seeing you at the upcoming conference!

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

Colin Adamo, M.S. (colin.adamo@utah.edu)
University of Utah

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#### **Letter from the SIG Co-Leaders**

Drs. Hannah Williamson and Emily Georgia Salivar

We, Dr. Hannah Williamson of UT Austin, and Dr. Emily Georgia Salivar of Nova Southeastern University, are excited to be writing our first update as SIG Co-Leaders after taking the reins in November 2020. In addition to introducing ourselves, we would like to talk about our plans for the SIG for the next two years. Our primary initiatives for our 2-year tenure revolve around the SIG membership: we hope to increase the number and diversity of our membership, increase active member involvement, and improve the overall membership experience.

First, we will build on the groundwork laid by outgoing Co-Leaders Mikhila Wildey and Christina Balderrama-Durbin to increase the diversity, in the ranks of our membership, as well as foster opportunities for members to increase competence in working with diverse populations in our teaching, research, and clinical work. Last Fall's preconference event centered on this issue, and we think it highlighted that we are all hungry to learn and collaborate, and that there is a lot of knowledge diffused across our SIG. We plan to create more opportunities for members to connect and share resources and ideas by continuing to support the clinical, research, and teaching workgroups who facilitated the preconference event. We also aim to develop new avenues for collaboration by compiling resources on our fantastic new website and having SIG members contribute columns to this newsletter.

Second, we had grand plans to revamp our entire membership system to make the listserv more user-friendly, make it easier for us to track membership, make it easier for you to pay dues, etc. However, we learned that most SIGs have this same desire and we are told that ABCT central plans to integrate SIG membership into the general ABCT membership system within the next two years. Therefore, we will not be doing a major overhaul - instead, we decided to go ahead and update the listserv account because the old system was not serving us as well as it could be. As you can see, the new listserv is now live, thanks to our Media Coordinator Corey Pettit. It is hosted on Google Groups, which allows users more control; you can decide whether you want to receive each message when it is sent or all messages as a digest at the end of the day, and you can unsubscribe yourself (though why would you want to?).

Looking ahead to the annual ABCT convention this November, we are very much hoping that things will be back to normal and it can be held in New Orleans, as scheduled. However, we recognize that even if that happens, not everyone will be able or willing to travel to attend in person. Thus, we hope to pilot test a hybrid online/in-person experience for our preconference event and SIG business meeting. We are not quite sure what that will look like just yet, and we are keeping things tentative because if 2020 has taught us anything, it's not to plan too far in advance! But if this hybrid option goes well, we hope to continue to use it in future conferences in order to facilitate more involvement from a diverse membership in the SIG.

Thank you and we look forward to serving the SIG! Please let us know if you have any ideas or suggestions on how to advance our initiatives.

Hannah (hwilliamson@utexas.edu) & Emily (esalivar@nova.edu)

### **Letter from the SIG Treasurer**

Dr. Michelle Ramos

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 187 (84 professionals, 103 students). This includes 14 new members (3 professionals and 11 students) since the November convention. Please reach out and encourage others to join as we always love to welcome new members.

The balance last reported at November's SIG business meeting was \$2020.00. Since then, we have paid out \$300 for poster awards and have taken in \$1028.83 in dues and underrepresented scholars donations. We have a current balance of \$2748.83. Thank you for your continued support!

Remember it is not too late to pay this year's dues. Dues are \$30 for professional members and \$5 for students, first-year post-docs, and retired members. Dues can be sent electronically via Venmo (send payment to @Michelle-Ramos-PhD) or via PayPal (send to <a href="mailto:mcramos@fullerton.edu">mcramos@fullerton.edu</a>). It is important to designate the payment as "send to friends and family" to avoid processing fees. For all dues, please indicate "ABCT Couples SIG" in the note.

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

Michelle (mcramos@fullerton.edu)

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

Jessica Kansky & Karena Leo

Hello from your Student Leaders!

Our second term as your student leaders has continued to be atypical, but we hope you are all staying safe and healthy as the world begins to move towards a "new normal." It was wonderful getting to "meet" some of you during the Couples SIG virtual ABCT meeting this year. We are hopeful we may be able to meet in person in New Orleans in November!

Couples SIG Cocktail Party

Due to the popularity of the Couples SIG Cocktail Party in previous years, we are currently working on organizing the cocktail party for our reunion in November in New Orleans! We are hopeful we can offer an in-person gathering but will default to ABCT's guidelines. We will keep everyone updated through the listserv (RSVP pending) and the fall newsletter.

**Couples SIG Student Symposium** 

We want to thank all of the students who submitted an abstract for consideration to represent the Couples SIG at ABCT in a student-organized and led symposium. We had many fantastic submissions, and it was wonderful to learn about the amazing research our peers are doing! We selected three students for the final symposium proposal that is focused on understanding relational trauma using multimethod assessment. We hope the reviewers at ABCT love the submission as much as we do.

## Get Involved!

We are looking forward to working with you all as head into our second year as student leaders in the Couples SIG. We are open to suggestions, concerns, questions, and feedback! Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time. Remember to join the Couples SIG and the SIG listserv, if you have not done so already. We are looking forward to meeting you, or seeing you again, in New Orleans.

Jessica (jk3gm@virginia.edu) & Karena (karena.leo@utah.edu)

## **FEATURED ARTICLE**

As noted in the letter from the SIG Co-Leaders, our SIG is committed to increasing our collective competence in working with diverse populations in our teaching, research, and clinical work. In line with our desire to share important resources and ideas related to these issues, we would like to direct the SIG attention to the article "The Black Lives Matter Movement: A Call to Action for Couple and Family Therapists" authored by some of our incredible SIG members.

Please find the abstract and link to the full-text publication below.

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#### The Black Lives Matter Movement:

## A Call to Action for Couple and Family Therapists

Abstract: The frequent police killings during the COVID-19 pandemic forced a reckoning among Americans from all backgrounds and propelled the Black Lives Matter movement into a global force. This manuscript addresses major issues to aid practitioners in the effective treatment of African Americans via the lens of Critical Race Theory and the Bioecological Model. We place the impacts of racism on Black families in historical context and outline the sources of Black family resilience. We critique structural racism embedded in all aspects of psychology and allied fields. We provide an overview of racial socialization and related issues affecting the parenting decisions in Black families, as well as a detailed overview of impacts of structural racism on couple dynamics. Recommendations are made for engaging racial issues in therapy, providing emotional support and validation to couples and families experiencing discrimination and racial trauma, and using Black cultural strengths as therapeutic resources.

**Full article citation:** Kelly, S., Jeremie-Brink, G., Chambers, A. L., & Smith-Bynum, M. A. (2020). The Black Lives Matter Movement: A Call to Action for Couple and Family Therapists. Family process, *59*(4), 1374–1388. https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12614

## **KUDOS!**

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

#### Congratulations to you!

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### Dr. Julia Babcock's Emotions in Marriage Lab

- © This year **Caitlin Kehoe** and **Victoria Bennett** led the development and submission of an internal grant for our COVID daily diary project. This grant was accepted and provided \$10,000 towards the project.
- ⊚ In addition to getting married, **Victoria Bennett** also matched with the Houston VA for internship this last year.

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

- Alex Wang, graduate student in the Binghamton University
   CAST Lab, will be headed off to the Syracuse VA to complete his
   pre-doctoral internship! Congratulations!
- Dana Ergas, graduate student in the Binghamton University CAST Lab, will be completing her pre-doctoral internship at the Syracuse VA next year! Congratulations!
- © **Seigie Kennedy**, graduate student in the Binghamton University CAST Lab, is nearing the end of her pre-doctoral internship at the Syracuse VA and has taken a postdoctoral position with the MindWell Center a private practice in upstate New York committed to contemporary evidence-based mental health treatment.

#### Dr. Brian Baucom's Couples Lab for Observational Studies

- © **Colin Adamo**, successfully matched to internship at the University of Pennsylvania Department of Psychiatry. Congrats, Colin!
- Karena Leo, is completing her pre-doctoral internship this year
   at University of Kansas Medical Center before heading to Duke for
   a post-doc. Congrats, Karena!

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## Dr. Don Baucom's UNC Couples Lab

- Danielle Weber, MA, from Dr. Don Baucom's UNC Couples Lab, successfully matched to internship at the Durham VA. Con-grats, Danielle!
- Danielle Weber, MA, received a university teaching award in recognition of her undergraduate teaching. Congrats, Danielle!
- Alexandra Wojda, MA, from Dr. Don Baucom's UNC Couples Lab, received the 2021 Outstanding Student Teacher Award from the Society for the Study of Clinical Psychology (SSCP). Con-grats, Alexandra!
- © **Emily Carrino**, BA, from Dr. Don Baucom's UNC Couples Lab, received an esteemed summer fellowship to conduct research in partnership with UNC's Center for Excellence in Eating Disorders (CEED). Congrats, Emily!

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## <u>Dr. Anthony Chambers of the Center for Applied Psychological and Family Studies</u>

- Dr. Chambers was elected to serve on the APA Board of Directors.
- © **Dr. Chambers** is the current President of American Academy of Couple and Family Psychology (AACFP), and currently serves on the board of the American Board of Couple and Family Psychology (ABCFP). These two organizations work in tandem to oversee the board certification process for Psychologists interested in receiving their ABPP in Couples. So please contact Dr. Chambers if you are interested in becoming board certified (ABPP)!

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#### Dr. Joanne Davila's Relationships Development Center

- Jiaqi Zhou successfully defended her dissertation!
- © Ellora Vilkin and Howard Huang matched to their first choice externships!
- ⑤ Joanne Davila received the 2020 Beverly Thorn Award for Outstanding Service as a DCT (Director of Clinical Training), Council of University Directors of Clinical Psychology (CUDCP)!
- ⑤ Former lab member **Lisa Starr** was promoted to Associate Professor at University of Rochester!
- ⑤ Former lab member Brian Feinstein accepted a position as an Associate Professor at Rosalind Franklin University!
- Former lab member Jessica Latack had a beautiful healthy baby!

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#### Dr. Rebecca Cobb's SFU Close Relationships Lab

- © Congratulations to PhD student **Lauren McRae** who gave birth to twin boys last August!
- © Congratulations to PhD student **Marissa Bowsfield** who recently gave birth to a little boy!
- © Congratulations to PhD student **Jessica Ferreira** who was awarded the Canadian Psychological Association Certificate of Academic Excellence for her master's Thesis and a Mitacs Research Training Award (\$6,000) for her doctoral training.
- © Congratulations to our RAs **Ainsley Tan** who will be starting a graduate program in counselling psychology and **Karina Thiessen** who will be starting a graduate program in Neurosciences at the University of British Columbia this fall!

## Dr. Kristina Coop Gordon's Couple Research Lab

- © **Dr. Erica Mitchell** (postdoc) was awarded a grant from the University of Tennessee Office of Community Engagement and Outreach, Division of Diversity and Engagement, to train graduate students as supplemental coaches for the online Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (ePREP) and to deliver this program to low-income couples in the community.
- © **D.J. Garcia** is completing his clinical internship at the University of Kansas Medical Center and will remain there to complete his postdoctoral fellowship in advanced clinical psychology, where he will work primarily in inpatient psychiatry and will be doing consultation/liaison work throughout the medical center.

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- © **Katherine Lenger** is completing her pre-doctoral internship at Alpert Medical School at Brown University and will remain there to complete a postdoctoral fellowship.
- © Dr. Kristina Gordon received the 2021 university level Alexander Prize which is given to the faculty member who embodies excellence in undergraduate teaching and distinguished scholarship.

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#### Dr. Michelle Leonard's Lab

© **Charlie Giraud** won the university's three-minute thesis competition. His thesis is titled 3MT Competition Title: Discrimination, Concealment, & Multiple Minority Status within LGBTQ+ Populations.

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# <u>Dr. Richard Mattson's Center for Transdisciplinary Research on Intimate Relationships Lab:</u>

- Samantha Wagner accepted a postdoctoral position as a Psychology Resident with EFT Specialization at the Tampa Bay Center for Relational Psychology! Congratulations and best wishes!
- © Our lab manager, **Angela Candrilli** was awarded the Kaschak Institute for Research on Women and Girls Student Fellowship for the 2020-2021 academic year! She was also accepted into Fairleigh Dickinson's Clinical Psychology PhD program. Nice job and best of luck! We will certainly miss you!

Shelby Scott's Promoting Resilience In DiversE (PRIDE) Family
Studies Lab

⊚ **Dr. Scott** started a tenure-track position at the University of Texas at San Antonio in 2020. She and her wife, Brandi, have survived moving to a new city and working from home full-time with an incredibly bright and rambunctious toddler for the past year. We are very grateful for all the extra time with our daughter this last year!

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# Sarah Whitton's The Today's Couples and Families Research Program

- © **Emily Devlin** received a University Research Council Graduate Student Research Fellowship!
- © **Lisa Godfrey** matched to an internship at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center!
- Neslihan James-Kangal graduated with her Ph.D. in August, 2020 and is completing a postdoctoral fellowship in the San Francisco VA Healthcare System

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#### Dr. Erica Wooden's UVic Healthy Relationships Lab

- © Congratulations to **Kari Duerksen**, who received a BC Support Unit Graduate Fellowship to conduct patient-oriented research on mental health supports in higher education.
- ⑤ In collaboration with Dr. Catherine Costigan, Dr. Woodin was also awarded a grant from the British Columbia Ministry of Health to explore experiences of secondary traumatic stress in mental health outreach teams during COVID.
- © Finally, congratulations to **Fanie Collardeau** for receiving the Psi Chi Mamie Phipps Clark Diversity Research Grant, as well as for successfully matching to the Edmonton Internship Consortium.

## **Lab Updates**

## Emotions in Marriage Lab, Dr. Julia Babcock

<u>Lab Update:</u> This year we initiated a longitudinal research project that includes a daily dairy design for couples to examine the impact of COVID on interpersonal outcomes. Additionally, we have initiated a collaboration with the Houston Fire Department to examine risk factors of relationship discord for first responders. Lastly, we are excited to announce that Neha Pathik and Deanna Pollard will be joining our lab as graduate students in the 2021-2022 year.

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

<u>Lab Update:</u> It has been a year of grit and resilience! Despite all the challenges, the CAST Lab has continued to grow and adapt.

First-year graduate student, Melissa Gates, is settling in "virtually" into the Binghamton University clinical science program and the CAST Lab. She is actively immersing herself in research experiences and writing publications related to dyadic emotion regulation and couple functioning in the context of trauma exposure. Eileen Barden, a fourth-year graduate student, successfully proposed her dissertation and her dissertation data collection is currently underway. She will be examining the relation between comorbid PTSD and alcohol use on dyadic coping and emotion regulation. Dana Ergas, fourth-year graduate student, and Alex Wang, fifth-year graduate student, are working diligently toward completing their dissertations prior to internship next year. Dana's dissertation is focused on minority stress (both individual and couple-level) and stress-related growth in couples who identify with marginalized sexual identities. Alex's work is centered on the moderating effects of attachment on dyadic physiological coregulation during stress recovery. Both Dana and Alex have secured a pre-doctoral internship position at the Syracuse VA!

Several federally funded projects in the lab are nearing the end of data collection including studies working with Veterans, military, and sexual minority couples. We are excited to discover and disseminate the findings from these projects and take the next steps toward advancing evidence-based care for marginalized and high-risk couples. None of this would be possible without our impressive and dedicated team of research assistants!

## UNC Couples Lab, Dr. Donald Baucom

<u>Lab Update:</u> Our lab continues both its treatment outcome research and basic research on various couple processes. We believe that both of these approaches are valuable in themselves and interact in a synergistic manner to contribute to our knowledge in the field of intimate relationship functioning.

#### Treatment research:

Eating disorders: Dr. Baucom and the lab continue their collaborative efforts with Dr. Bulik at UNC evaluating the effectiveness of a couple-based intervention for binge eating disorder in our community clinic. To further disseminate therapist training of our empirically-supported interventions in eating disorders, we are partnering with 3-C Family Services and the UNC Center for Excellence in Eating Disorders to take therapist training online for our couple-based treatment for anorexia nervosa (Uniting Couples in the treatment of Anorexia Nervosa - UCAN) and our couple-based intervention for binge eating disorder (UNiting couples In the Treatment of Eating disorders – UNITE; an RCT compar-

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ing individual- and couple-based treatments are ongoing). Insomnia: Our lab is collaborating with Dr. Sean Drummond in Australia and Dr. Melissa Jenkins, a former UNC doctoral student, on a randomized controlled trial to treat insomnia with a couple-based intervention, expanding our couples and psychopathology work to a new disorder. The RCT is ongoing.

Depression: Our lab continues a long-standing collaboration with the National Health Service in England to offer training and supervision to therapists in our 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.

Same sex relationship distress: Kim Pentel successfully defended her dissertation project on the ACCESS Program (Affirming Couples Counseling to Engage Same-Sex Partners), a couple therapy tailored for same-sex couples, drawing upon the CBCT framework and sexual minority stress literature. The manuscript based on this study is now under review.

#### Basic research:

In response to the rapid onset of COVID-19, our lab collaboratively designed and completed an online survey study to examined changes to individual and couple functioning as a result of "stay-at-home" orders across the US in May 2020. We also investigated differences in functioning for populations who are at higher risk of a poor health outcome from the virus. Our main outcome manuscript is under review. A poster presenting these main findings was presented at the 2020 virtual conference.

Our lab continues its broad-based exploration of 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 or a medical problem, distressed couples who engage in psychological violence, couples in a longitudinal study of relationship functioning, long-distance couples, and same-sex couples. We are currently working on multiple projects at various stages. The manuscript based on the longitudinal study of relationship functioning, led by Danielle Weber (5th year student), has now been published. Other manuscripts, which are currently under review, focus on interpersonal emotion regulation in couples with a focus on (a) physical and/or psychological violence, led by Alexandra Wojda (4th year student), and (b) longitudinal symptoms of psychopathology, led by Danielle Weber (5th year student).

Dr. Baucom and Dr. Melanie Fischer are co-Principal Investigators on a funded effort to explore how symptoms of anxiety and depression relate to various interpersonal emotion dynamics in couples. This effort uses data across multiple samples of couples using integrative data analysis, in collaboration with Dr. Brian Baucom and Dr. Dan Bauer, along with several other couple researchers who have provided invaluable data sets. Data analysis is ongoing.

In line with the lab's continued interest in psychopathology and relationship behavior, Emily Carrino (2nd year student) and Alexandra Wojda (4th year student) are co-leading an investigation on differences in relationship schematic processing between couples experiencing Anorexia Nervosa (AN) and Binge Eating Disorder (BED). Data collection is currently ongoing.

Our lab is collaborating with Dr. Shelby Langer and Dr. Laura Porter in a large investigation of communication among couples experiencing different forms of cancer. Dr. Baucom is involved in procedures for observational coding of couple interactions and

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emotional arousal. Dr. Melanie Fischer and Danielle Weber (5th year student) have provided consultation regarding procedures for processing and analyzing vocal features of emotional arousal within couple interactions, and Dr. Brian Baucom is overseeing comprehensive behavioral coding efforts. Analysis is ongoing.

Led by Danielle Weber (5th year student) in collaboration with Dr. Steve Du Bois and Dr. Tamara Goldman Sher, our study of community long-distance couples in comparison to geographically-close couples is complete and data analyses are ongoing. We aim to better understand times of transitions within these couples; that is, when partners transition from functioning individually to times when the couple is together. Danielle Weber (5th year student) is using components of these data as her dissertation and is on track to defend her dissertation in the spring. Emily Carrino (2nd year student) has led two investigations about long distance couples (LDCs): one examining trajectories and predictors of conflict avoidance across time for LDCs and one mixedmethods (qualitative and quantitative) analysis to explore differences in remote and in-person communication topics. Publications are in preparation for these investigations.

Our lab continues to be committed to conducting research on underserved populations of couples. Emily Carrino (2nd year student) is currently conducting secondary data analyses to compare differential patterns of relationship functioning between subgroups of sexual and gender minority couples, with a focus on couples in which one or both partners is bisexual+. Alexandra Wojda's (4th year student) dissertation will focus on better understanding the cognitive processes associated with individual and relationship functioning in low-income couples. She is also currently preparing a manuscript that introduces a novel framework for understanding relationship resilience within low-income populations.

## SFU Close Relationships Lab, Dr. Rebecca Cobb

<u>Lab Update:</u> We have completed recruitment for an SFU funded randomized controlled trial in collaboration with Dr. Joanne Davila from Stony Brook University, NY that examines the effects of a relationship education workshop on individual and relational outcomes. Although COVID-19 interfered with our data collection process we quickly adapted to present the workshops online. Follow-up data collection will be complete in the fall and we can start learning more about how learning important relationship skills benefits young adults.

Richard Rigby and Lauren McRae successful defended their MA theses in the summer on Zoom. Richard's thesis focused on how positive illusions about dyadic perspective taking buffered the negative association between attachment insecurity and marital satisfaction. Richard is also working on a qualitative analysis of couples' experiences during the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic and learning about how couples found while stressful, the pandemic offered unexpected opportunities to connect and strengthen their relationship. Lauren's thesis focused on how approach and avoidance motives to engage in relationship boundary discussions are associated with relationship outcomes in longdistance couples. Surprisingly both approach and avoidance motives were negatively associated with relational outcomes via discussion quality, which may indicate that even theoretically beneficial variables (i.e., approach motives) may depend on the relationship context in which they are enacted. Congratulations to Richard who started the PhD program in the fall and to Lauren who will be starting the PhD program in Fall 2021 after a maternity leave.

We would also like to welcome our new graduate student Shula-

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mit Sternin, who will be starting a MA in psychology at Simon Fraser University this Fall with plans to pursue a career as a clinical psychologist. Her research focuses on dyadic relationships and sexuality within a relational context.

We also welcome Michelle Korlacka who will be starting her honours thesis in the Fall. Michelle has been an RA in our lab since the pandemic started and is looking forward to learning more about support and attachment security in romantic relationships.

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#### Relationship Development Center, Dr. Joanne Davila

<u>Lab Update:</u> The Relationship Development Center continues its work on romantic relationships and well-being among individuals of diverse sexual and gender identities. We continue to be involved in a number of projects and collaborations, including: (1) the development and evaluation of a relationship education program for college students, and its adaptation to different populations using a variety of formats, (2) the study of LGBTQ individuals' identity, health, and relationship experiences and (3) 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 five PhD students: Jiaqi Zhou, currently on internship and preparing to graduate in May! Ellora Vilkin, Howard Huang, and T.J. Sullivan (co-advised by Dan O'Leary), all finishing up their 3rd year, and Stephan Brandt, who is nearing the end of his 1st year (done completely remotely...). They are all actively working on lab projects, as well as developing their own lines of research.

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# Penn State Couple and Family Adaptation to Stress Lab, Dr. Steffany Fredman

**<u>Lab Update:</u>** Our lab is continuing to work on a variety of basic and translational research projects focused on couples and stress. We're delighted that Annie Le has returned to our lab as a postdoctoral research associate and are very excited about the work that August Jenkins is doing as part of her NIMHD F31 predoctoral fellowship focused on the daily and long-term associations between relationship functioning and individual mental health among African Americans within a sociocultural context. We're wrapping up a project on micro timescale emotion regulatory processes among couples with PTSD conducted in collaboration with Melanie Fischer from the University of Heidelberg, Don Baucom from UNC-Chapel Hill, and Amy Marshall from Penn State and are eager to continue this work in the context of treatment outcome research. Building on the success of our pilot study of an abbreviated, intensive, multi-couple group version of cognitive-behavioral conjoint therapy for PTSD (AIM-CBCT for PTSD), we're currently preparing a proposal to the DoD to conduct an RCT to test the efficacy of AIM-CBCT for PTSD relative to the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) in military couples. This work is being conducted in collaboration with Scott Stanley, Galena Rhoades, Candice Monson, and the Consortium to Alleviate PTSD.

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#### VIU Couples Lab, Dr. Cameron Gordon

<u>Lab Update:</u> I am excited to announce that my family and I have moved to British Columbia for a position at Vancouver Island University. My students have started some fun new projects in our VIU Couples Lab, and I am looking forward to seeing you all in person at ABCT!

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#### Gordon Couple Research Lab, Dr. Kristina Coop Gordon

.ab Update: We have two updates from our John Templeton Foundation grant funded study led by Dr. Kristina Coop Gordon and Dr. Erica Mitchell (postdoc) to use implementation science principles to develop effective partnerships between university staff and a network of local churches and clergy: 1) we are wrapping up data collection on our qualitative study interviewing representatives from local churches about their experiences partnering with a university-based initiative and 2) we have begun collecting data to map socioeconomic mobility, relationship health, and availability of relationship services by zip code, which will help us determine which local communities are in greatest need of services and use a community-based participatory approach to bring services to those communities. We also have an update to share from The South Asian Immigrant Marriage Attitudes Study which seeks to better understand first-generation South Asian immigrants' attitudes towards love marriage versus arranged marriage for their children who have grown up in the United States. This study is being led by Zahra Amer whose research team has recently finished analyzing the qualitative data and is working on writing up the findings for publication.

Center for Transdisciplinary Research on Intimate Relationships (CTROIR; Mattson) & The Marriage and Family Lab (Johnson), Drs. Richard Mattson and Matthew Johnson

<u>Lab Update:</u> The CTROIR has grown! Michael Shaw and Alyssa Miville have joined the lab and will be working with Dr. Richard Mattson! They join current graduate students Samantha Wagner, Allison McKinnon, and Maggie Parker; as well as Erin Alexander and Quinn Hendershott in the Marriage & Family Lab (Dr. Matthew Johnson).

Our labs continue to work together (remotely) on a variety of exciting projects related to oxytocin, intimate touch, sexual orientation, intimate partner violence, and sexual assault. Allison McKinnon, Maggie Parker, and Erin Alexander are all working diligently on their respective dissertation projects. Quinn Hendershott is currently collecting data for her masters thesis project.

Other exciting news: Zhiqian Zhang has accepted our offer as Lab Manager and will begin her position in Summer 2021! Four of our undergraduate research assistants (Angela Candrilli, Xinni Wang, Helena Ojarovsky, and Katarina Hadjer) have elected to complete honors theses this semester!

Promoting Resilience In DiversE (PRIDE) Family Studies Lab, University of Texas at San Antonio, Dr. Shelby Scott

**<u>Lab Update:</u>** Dr. Scott started her PRIDE Family Studies Lab last year. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, she and her students have successfully started several new projects. Dr. Scott received an internal grant focused on understanding the experiences of transgender individuals who go through part/all of their gender transitions while in romantic relationships. She has also submitted a grant to the American Psychological Foundation to continue this research by involving transgender individuals and their romantic partners for a longitudinal study. Dr. Scott's lab has also just completed a 7-year follow-up study on female same -gender couples focused on longitudinal predictors of relationship stability and reasons for break-up. She also received a data access award from the Association of American Medical Colleges and is working on a project investigating how changes in statelevel protections translate to improvements in healthcare experiences for sexual minorities. Dr. Scott is working in collaboration with Dr. Aleja Parsons on a project focused on defining race-

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based stress and the impact of these experiences on Black couples. Finally, Dr. Scott also has her first doctoral student, Quyen Do, and advises several undergraduate students. We look forward to taking our first lab picture after COVID-19 is gone!

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# University of Denver, Howard Markman, Galena Rhoades, & Scott Stanley

<u>Lab Update:</u> Galena is hiring for two fully funded Research Assistant Professor positions and has a new graduate student starting in the fall. Welcome Briana Schubert! Howard and colleagues have successfully translated and culturally adapted an Arabic version of PREP for couples getting married in Qatar. Scott is continuing to work on a couple of program evaluations along with basic relationship science papers, and he is enjoying stats more all the time.

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## The Today's Couples and Families Research Program, Sarah Whitton

<u>Lab Update:</u> We are wrapping up 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 will complete wave 7 in June, and are on track to have 92% retention of our sample (N = 488) across all 7 waves. In the upcoming no cost extension year, we plan to continue using this multiwave, multimethod data to build out understanding of healthy and unhealthy or violent relationships among SGM-AFAB, as well as to identify risk and protective factors for physical and mental health problems.

Although the pandemic has put a hold on projects evaluating the Better Together program (formerly called the Strengthening Same Sex Relationships Programs), we are continuing efforts to refine and pilot an online version of the program, in collaboration with Sherry Rostosky of the University of Kentucky.

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#### The UVic Healthy Relationships Lab, Erica Woodin, PhD

Lab Update: Here at the University of Victoria on beautiful Vancouver Island, we have recently rebranded ourselves as the Healthy Relationships Lab to capture the range of activities we are involved in. We are currently running a study funded by the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to conduct brief motivational assessments with couples experiencing intimate partner violence during the transition to parenthood. Graduate students in our lab are also conducting research on risk factors for IPV during the transition to parenthood, cyber dating abuse, cross-cultural beliefs about shame, and game-based interventions for families with adolescents. Finally, we are also conducting a range of community-engaged research related to building supportive relationships between individuals with mental illness and their treatment teams.

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