

YEAR IN REVIEW

The AFFIRM
Relationships team in
2025



Learn more about our studies, team,
collaborations and more!

FOREWORD

A note from David Doyle

2025 has been an exciting year for the AFFIRM Relationships team, particularly with the launch of our prospective cohort study that has been over two years in the making. We have now seen the first 20 or so participants starting on hormone therapy join this exciting cohort and it has really inspired us in our work. Collaborating with such wonderful participants has greatly enlivened our research — we cannot wait to see what results come from this groundbreaking study. We are particularly encouraged by the way in which participants have earnestly engaged with our digital tool for visualizing their social networks. What interesting social lives we all lead! In that spirit, I am also struck by the amazing group of colleagues working with me on this project, and I look forward to our teamwork as the group continues to change and expand in 2026.

TEAM CHANGES

In 2025, the AFFIRM team saw some changes, including team members leaving and joining us!

A new chapter for Nessa

In the summer of 2025, Nessa Millet was awarded a position as an Assistant Professor at the department of Psychiatry in the University Medical Center Groningen! Nessa started as the first postdoctoral researcher in the AFFIRM project, and she was instrumental in setting up the project website and the qualitative studies. We're very proud of Nessa, although we also secretly miss her cheerful chats around the office a little bit. Nessa, Groningen is lucky to have you!

Welcoming Jessica

At the end of 2025, we recruited a new research assistant to join the project. This was a success: we're lucky that Jessica Fenenga is joining the project to assist us! Jessica graduated with a Masters' on Gender and Sexuality and serves as co-chair of UvA Pride. In our team, Jessica will mainly work on the prospective study, coordinating the day-to-day tasks and overseeing the data collection. Other than that, they will also coordinate some of the research dissemination tasks (social media, website) as they come up. Welcome Jessica!

STUDIES AND PROJECTS

INTERVIEW STUDY

In 2024 and 2025, we conducted interviews with trans- and gender diverse people about their experiences with gender-affirming hormones. We asked 26 people about how starting gender-affirming hormones affected their emotions, self-control, and relationships. Most said that hormones helped them feel more like themselves and boosted their self-esteem. They noticed emotional changes which were different for feminizing and masculinizing hormones. These shifts affected relationships as people felt more confident being honest, which sometimes caused conflict at first but often led to deeper, more genuine connections. We suggest that healthcare providers should talk about these emotional and social changes so people know what to expect when starting hormone therapy. Full results of this study will be published in the first half of 2026.



PROSPECTIVE COHORT STUDY

In June of 2025, we started a new study, in which we include participants who are starting gender-affirming hormones, voice training, or who get a mastectomy. We then follow them for 2 years, and ask them to complete questionnaires and tasks about their well-being and social relationships, alongside many other topics.

Want to know more about this study?

We also published [the study protocol](#)!

You can also find more information about this study on our website: linked [here](#).



TRANS LOVE SURVEY

In the fall of 2025, we also launched the Trans Love European Study, an international research project exploring how transgender people experience romantic relationships across three European countries: the Netherlands, Italy, and Croatia. So far, the Dutch version of the survey has received very positive feedback from participants, with around 40 of our target 100 responses already collected.

We invite collaborators and participants to help us continue this momentum by sharing the study with others who might be interested in taking part: find more information [here!](#)



WANT TO PARTICIPATE?

We are still looking for participants for the Trans Love survey and the prospective study!

Trans Love survey:

Dutch, Italian or Croatian people who identify as transgender and are in a romantic relationship

Prospective study:

Trans- or gender diverse people in the Netherlands who are starting GAHT, voice training or who are getting a mastectomy

For more information, see

www.AFFIRMRelationships.com

PUBLICATIONS IN 2025: PART 1

Di Luigi, G., Zoppolat, G., Stieglitz, S., & Doyle, D. M. (2025). Systematic review and development of a comprehensive conceptualization of social gender affirmation for trans and gender diverse people. SSM-Mental Health, 100453.

Morssinkhof, M. W., Doyle, D. M., van der Werf, Y. D., den Heijer, M., Heijboer, A., Broekman, B. F., & Stenvers, D. J. (2025). Effects of gender-affirming hormones on diurnal cortisol concentrations: A prospective study. Neurobiology of Stress, 100741.

Morssinkhof, M. W., Schipper, M., Kreukels, B. P., van der Tuuk, K., den Heijer, M., van den Heuvel, O. A., Doyle, D. M., & Broekman, B. F. (2025). Changes in affect variability after starting gender-affirming hormone therapy. Psychoneuroendocrinology, 107408.

Gallagher, L., Barreto, M., & Doyle, D. M. (2025). Minority stress and couple relationships: navigating stigma in romantic relationships. In Research Handbook on Couple and Family Relationships (pp. 328-342). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Barreto, M., Doyle, D. M., & Maes, M. (2025). Researching gender and loneliness differently. Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences.



PUBLICATIONS IN 2025: PART 2

Morssinkhof, M. W., Millet, N., Zoppat, G. T., Stieglitz, S. K., Kreukels, B. P., & Doyle, D. M. (2025). Disentangling the biopsychosocial effects of gender-affirming hormone therapy on social health: A protocol for a multi-arm prospective cohort study. (AFFIRM Relationships). *Comprehensive Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 100329.

Noone, C., Southgate, A., Ashman, A., Quinn, É., Comer, D., Shrewsbury, D., ... & McLamore, Q. (2025). Critically appraising the Cass report: methodological flaws and unsupported claims. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 25(1), 128.

Millet, N., Karsten, R., Bosman, B. W., Albader, S., Kreukels, B. P., & Doyle, D. M. (2026). Integrating Co-Created and Theory-Driven Insights: A Worked Example Using an Equitable and Power Sharing Approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 25, 16094069251381898.

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