

FACULTY & STAFF



Laura D. Seligman, Ph.D., ABPP

Dr. Seligman is a Professor of Psychological Science at UTRGV and Past President of the Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT). She received a Ph.D. and M.S. in Clinical Psychology from The Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and a B.A. in Psychology, with a minor in Statistics, from The State University of New York at Oneonta. Dr. Seligman is a Principal Investigator (PI) of a National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) UG3/UH3 grant to develop and assess one-session treatments for dental phobia in youth. Previously, she was a PI on an NIDCR R01 grant to study methods to prevent the development of dental anxiety and and a site PI for a National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) U01 grant that examined genetic impacts on obsessive-compulsive disorder.



Joseph D. Hovey, Ph.D.

Dr. Hovey is a Professor of Psychological Science at UTRGV. He received a Ph.D. and M.A. in Clinical Psychology from The University of Michigan and a B.A. in Anthropology from UCLA. Dr. Hovey served as a Commissioner and Chair of Research on the American Psychological Association Commission on Accreditation and is a former Research Director of the American Association of Suicidology. He is a PI on an NIDCR UG3/UH3 grant to develop and evaluate treatments for dental phobia in youth. Formerly, he was a site PI for an NIMH U01 grant that examined environmental and genetic impacts on obsessive-compulsive disorder in Latin individuals in North and South America.



Katelyn Villa, M.S.

Katelyn Villa is a Research Associate III at UTRGV. She holds a Masters and Bachelors of Science in Exercise Physiology from The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. She serves as a Project Director for a UG3/UH3 research grant awarded by NIDCR to develop and evaluate treatment for dental anxiety in youth and she previously served as a project director on an R01 research grant awarded by NIDCR. Before joining the Behavioral Health Lab, Ms. Villa's work experience included research in topics such as exercise physiology, nutrition, treatment-resistant depression, suicide behavior, stroke, and neuroscience.



Eva Villarreal, B.A.

Eva Villarreal is a Research Associate I at UTRGV. Ms. Villarreal received a B.A. in Psychology from The University of Texas at San Antonio. She primarily works on an NIDCR UG3/UH3 grant to develop and evaluate treatment for dental anxiety in youth. Her previous work experience includes researching topics such as identity expression and concealment, authenticity, depression, alcohol usage, and sexual minority stress.



Maeve McGeady, B.S.

Maeve McGeady is a Research Associate I at UTRGV. Ms. McGeady received a B.S. in Psychology from Trinity University in San Antonio. She primarily works on an NIDCR UG3/UH3 research grant whose aim is to develop effective treatment for children suffering from dental phobia. During her undergraduate studies, she gained research experience in social psychology and developed an interest in working with children and families.

CONTACT US

For information or questions about our lab's activities:



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OUR MISSION

Research in the Behavioral Health Lab is aimed at alleviating psychopathology across the lifespan with a particular focus on anxiety, depression, and suicidal behavior as well as the intersection of physical and mental health.



EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS

Identifying Mechanisms to Prevent Dental Anxiety

Although dental phobia often leads to inadequate oral health care, there are no effective evidence-based preventive programs for dental phobia. This project thus identified causal mechanisms—through virtual reality techniques—that can be targeted to prevent dental phobia. This project was funded by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR).

Latin American Trans-Ancestry Initiative for OCD Genomics (LATINO) Project

The Behavioral Health Lab is part of a multi-site project that examined environmental and genetic determinants of obsessive-compulsive disorder in Latin individuals in North America and South America. This project was funded by the National Institute of Mental Health.

One-Session Treatment for Dental Phobia in Youth

The goal of this project is to develop and evaluate treatment options for dental phobia in children, a disorder that affects upwards of 730,000 youth in the United States. This project is funded by the NIDCR.

Aquaphobia and Lack of Swimming Skills in Youth

Latino/a youth have higher rates of drowning and lower swimming ability compared to youth in other ethnic groups. This project is examining the link between fear of water and lack of swimming ability in youth across ethnic groups. Project findings will inform the development of effective aquaphobia interventions, which may serve to decrease water-related accidents.

Body Image, Cyberbullying, and Suicide Behavior

This project is examining how various body image variables (e.g., body esteem, body shame, body ideal internalization) interact with social variables (e.g., social anxiety, social comparison) to enhance susceptibility to being cyberbullied through social media, thus increasing depression and suicide risk.

Influence of Cultural Values on Latina Suicide

Latina adolescents have consistently reported greater suicide behavior compared to other adolescent groups. To better understand this phenomena, this study examines whether differences in traditional gender role expectations leads to family conflict which, in turn, increases suicide behavior in Latina adolescents.

ABOUT US

The Behavioral Health Lab conducts interdisciplinary, state-of-the-art research on emotional, behavioral, and physical health and well-being. We work closely with professionals and students across disciplines including dentists, statisticians, physicians, geneticists, public health individuals, psychologists, and community stakeholders.

We aim to understand the assessment, etiology, development, treatment, and public health impact of anxiety and depression and the interconnectedness of mental and physical health.

We utilize translational methodologies so that our work has a meaningful impact on the lives of individuals in the Rio Grande Valley and beyond.

