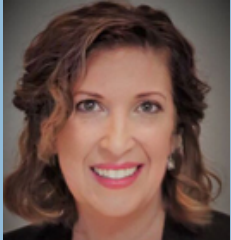


FACULTY

Laura D. Seligman, Ph.D., ABPP



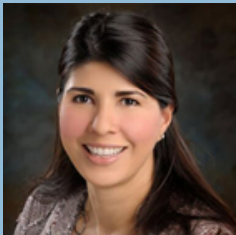
Dr. Seligman is a Professor of Psychological Science at UTRGV and Past President of the Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT). She received a Ph.D. and M.S. in Clinical Psychology from The Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and a B.A. in Psychology, with a minor in Statistics, from The State University of New York at Oneonta. Dr. Seligman is the Principal Investigator (PI) of a National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) R01 grant to study methods to prevent the development of dental anxiety and phobia; the PI of an NIDCR UG3 grant to develop a one-session treatment for dental phobia in youth; and a site Co-PI for a National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) U01 grant to examine genetic impacts on Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) in Latin individuals.

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 serves 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 site Co-PI for an NIMH U01 grant to examine genetic impacts on OCD in Latin individuals in North America and South America, and is a Co-Investigator (Co-I) on an NIDCR UG3 grant to develop a one-session culturally-appropriate treatment for dental phobia in underserved youth.

Liza Talavera-Garza, Ph.D.



Dr. Talavera-Garza is an Assistant Professor of Psychological Science at UTRGV. She received a Ph.D. in Community Psychology and a B.A. in Psychology from The University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Talavera-Garza's research focuses on the intersection between behavioral and physical health issues among older Latino/a adults. Dr. Talavera-Garza is the PI on a grant awarded by the RGV Alzheimer's Disease Resource Center for Minority Aging Research, and a Co-I on an NIDCR UG3 grant to develop a one-session treatment for dental phobia in underserved youth.

STAFF

Katelyn Villa, M.S.



Katelyn Villa is a Research Associate III at UTRGV. Ms. Villa received an M.S. and B.A. in Exercise Physiology from The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. Ms. Villa serves as a Project Director for an R01 research grant awarded by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) and also works on an NIDCR UG3 grant to develop a treatment for dental anxiety in youth. Her previous work experience includes research in topics such as exercise physiology, treatment-resistant depression, suicide behavior, strokes, and neuroscience.

Andrea C. Torres, B.S.



Andrea Carolina Torres is a Research Associate I at UTRGV. Ms. Torres received a B.S. in Neuroscience and Behavior, with a minor in Psychology, from Florida Atlantic University. She primarily works on a UG3 research grant awarded by NIDCR whose aim is to develop effective treatment for children suffering from dental phobia. She has experience in undergraduate medicine in Colombia, epidemiology, family medicine, and gastric cancer research.

CONTACT US

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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 identifies causal mechanisms—through virtual reality techniques—that can be targeted to prevent dental phobia. This project is 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 examining the genetics of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) in Latin individuals in North America and South America. This project is funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

One-Session Treatment for Dental Phobia in Youth

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

Cognitive Functioning in Older Mexican Adults

This study is examining the benefits of social engagement on the cognitive health of older Mexican adults who are at risk for developing Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Study findings will inform the development of community-based approaches to mitigate cognitive decline. This study is funded by the National Institute on Aging (NIA).

Psychological Reactions to the COVID-19 Pandemic

This project is assessing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of essential workers and other individuals in the U.S. One of the specific goals of the project is to examine the functioning of individuals diagnosed with a pre-pandemic anxiety disorder.

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 project is examining how differences in traditional gender role expectations can lead to family conflict which, in turn, can increase 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.

