



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY

School of Behavioral Health

Doctoral Candidates
Town and Gown Ceremony
September 4, 2020

Program

Processional.....*Triumphal March* from *Aida* by Giuseppe Verdi

Welcome.....Dr. Beverly J. Buckles

Opening Prayer.....Dr. Adam Aréchiga

Graduate Awards.....Dr. Beverly J. Buckles

Research Excellence Awards.....Dr. Susanne Montgomery

Reading of Dissertation Abstracts.....Dr. Kendal Boyd

Hooding of Graduates.....Families, Friends, and Faculty

Closing Prayer.....Dr. Beverly J. Buckles

Recessional.....*Rondeau* by Jean Joseph Mouret



Psychology

Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology

Naina Mahtani, PsyD

Medical and Parental Predictors of Self-Efficacy in Pediatric Chronic Illness

Self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to carry-out behaviors, is associated with medical adherence and prognosis. The purpose of this study was to assess parental factors affecting self-efficacy in chronically ill children. We found that low-income and single parent households predict lower self-efficacy in children. We hope to use this research to collaborate with local agencies to help support the development of individual and group interventions to promote self-efficacy in this high need population.

Acknowledgements: *Thank you to my absolutely incredible family for supporting me through this journey. I am forever grateful, and I love you immensely. WE did it!*

Hooding by: *Varsha and Deepak Mahtani (parents) Sumitra Mahtani (grandmother)*

Sarah Y. Nam An, PsyD

Stage 2 Outpatient Adolescent Recovery (SOAR) Program Family Therapy Manual

Studies have shown that effective treatment of self-injurious thoughts and behaviors include varying elements of family involvement with Dialectical Behavioral Therapy for Adolescents. The aim of this treatment manual is to combine evidence-supported family integration to DBT-A treatment in order to more comprehensively address the needs of self-injurious adolescents and improve outcomes. Specifically, this treatment manual utilizes Structural Family Therapy (SFT) interventions combined with the adolescent recovery program, Stage 2 Outpatient Adolescent Recovery (SOAR).

Acknowledgements: *Thank you to Dr. Boyd and Dr. Cafferky for their support, edits, guidance, and invaluable feedback.*

Aniel Ponce, PsyD

SOAR (Stage 2 Outpatient Adolescent Recovery) Clinical Interview Manual

To address concerns regarding readiness to leave treatment by individuals completing the Dialectical Behavioral Therapy for Adolescents (DBT-A) Stage 1 Program, the SOAR (Stage 2 Outpatient Adolescent Recovery) initial interview treatment manual was developed at the Loma Linda Behavioral Health Institute (BHI) to assess adolescent participants and appropriately place them in a treatment group that would meet their follow-up mental health needs progressing into Stage 2 of treatment effectively.

Acknowledgements: *I would like to thank Dr. Cafferky, Dr. Boyd, colleagues, and members of SOAR Research Laboratory who provided feedback and support toward the completion of this project.*

Hooding by: *Shaina Ponce (wife)*

Abigail Alido, PsyD

Meal and Food Selection Patterns during Binge Episodes in a Sample of Racially Diverse Adults Seeking Binge Eating Treatment

Studying food selection and associated eating patterns among ethnically diverse adults with binge eating disorder warrants greater attention, given the high binge eating prevalence among ethnic minorities. The aims of this study were to examine eating patterns during binge episodes in an ethnically diverse sample. Results indicate slight differences in food selection between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic participants. Future research should further investigate such differences and explore the cultural context of food to inform culturally sensitive binge eating interventions.

Acknowledgements: Thank you to Dr. Herbozo for her support, patience, and hours of edits even from afar and to Dr. Susanne Montgomery for her invaluable feedback.

Hooding by: Maria Alido (mother)

Bryce Jacobson, PsyD

The Relationship between Subsyndromal Symptomatic Depression and Cognitive Dysfunction

Subsyndromal Symptomatic Depression (SSD) affects 15% of older adults. While having a Major Depressive Disorder represents a risk factor for Alzheimer's Disease, the association between SSD and cognitive decline has not been explored in depth. My study found that SSD—specifically symptoms of “hopelessness”, “dysphoric mood”, and “cognitive impairment”—predicted worse scores in immediate memory in a sample of healthy older adults, suggesting that even subsyndromal symptoms of depression may represent a significant risk for cognitive impairment.

Hooding by: Cheryl Tan-Jacobson and Brad Jacobson (parents)

Brandon Schmid, PsyD

Validity of the Perceptual Ability Test

The Perceptual Ability Test (PAT), a subtest of the Dental Admissions Test, is used by US Dental Schools to evaluate the perceptual ability of incoming applicants. However, previous studies have found that the PAT had limited utility in predicting students' clinical achievement. We found that among students enrolled at LLU School of Dentistry between 2009 to 2013, PAT scores significantly predicted performance in pre-clinical lab courses, and select clinical and licensure exam subtests, suggesting the PAT maintains some utility in predicting aspects of both preclinical and clinical performance outcomes among dental school students.

Acknowledgements: I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Drs. Lee and Aréchiga. I also want to thank my family for all the support they have shown me throughout my graduate education.

Taylor Cosanella, PsyD

Demographic Moderators of the Relationship Between Adverse Childhood Experiences and Cigarette Smoking

Research suggests that as the number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) increase, so does smoking behavior. We tested potential demographic moderators of this relationship. Neither ACEs nor interactions between ACE scores and demographic moderators predicted smoking outcomes, though sex, race, education, and income were significantly associated. Men, individuals with lower income and education, and certain racial/ethnic groups may be more vulnerable to smoking, allowing for targeted assessment and intervention to improve treatment access, motivation, and success.

Acknowledgements: *I would like to express my sincerest thanks to Dr. Morrell, Dr. Neece, and my friends and family who supported me on this journey.*

Hooding by: *Dean and Julie Cosanella (parents)*

Nicolette Youkhaneh, PsyD

Adult Sexual Assault, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and Smoking Outcomes among Veterans

Smoking, sexual assault history, depression, and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are uniquely prevalent in military populations. We tested the interrelationships among these variables in male and female veterans. Sexual assault history and ACE scores were significant predictors of depression, and the relationship between ACEs and smoking was significant. This study highlights the importance of screening and integrating mental health services in healthcare and the need for greater public health prevention measures in military and veteran populations.

Acknowledgements: *My sincerest gratitude to God and my loved ones for their unwavering love and support throughout this journey!*

Hooding by: *Nelson and Azita Youkhaneh (parents)*

Marina Bassili, PsyD

Non-Accidental Trauma: Nature of Subsequent Encounters and Related Outcomes

This study examined the nature of subsequent hospital encounters in pediatric victims of Non-Accidental Trauma (NAT), or severe physical abuse resulting in hospitalization at Loma Linda Children's Hospital. Researchers identified services received post-discharge and investigated the short- and long-term effects experienced by pediatric NAT victims. Results indicate that the majority of NAT patients returned to LLU for follow-up care within one month of the NAT encounter and were most commonly seen by primary care, internal medicine, neurology and neurosurgery, and rehabilitation services.

Acknowledgements: *I want to thank Dr. Camie Neece for her unwavering support throughout this journey, along with my parents, Mona and Ramses, and my sister, Veronica.*

Hooding by: *Mona and Ramses Bassili (parents)*

Lilit Hovsepyan, PsyD

Predictors of Parental Distress among Parents of Overweight Children with Developmental Disabilities

We examined whether child overweight status predicts parental distress, above and beyond factors typically predictive of parenting stress in parents with children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDDs) and overweight. Child factors examined included weight status, behavioral problems, and social skills. There was no significant relationship between child BMI and parental distress; however, increased child behavior problems and poor social skills were predictive of increased parental distress. Results suggest that despite overweight/obesity status, children's behavior problems and skills deficits are the dominant sources of parental distress.

Acknowledgements: Thank you, Dr. Davis and Dr. Neece for her co-launching this amazing study and guiding me through the doctoral project with immense support and compassion.

Hooding by: Chris Meza (partner)

Shirin Mostofi, PsyD

Parental Involvement as a Mediator of ACE Scores and Intelligence among Children

Parental involvement was examined as a mediator of the relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and children's IQ. We set out to explore if, as ACEs increased, child IQ decreased via lack of parental involvement. Results indicate that parental involvement was not a significant mediator. However, ACEs themselves were significantly associated with parental involvement.

Acknowledgements: I would like to express my wholehearted gratitude to my father, mother, and brother for their endless sacrifices, unconditional love, and continuous support.

Hooding by: Alda Mostofi (brother)

Katherine Yamauchi, PsyD

Program Evaluation on the Kids First Program

This study is a program evaluation of the Kids First program for parents and children who have experienced divorce and/or separation. This study assessed the usefulness of program interventions related to parental insight, co-parenting, and child adjustment. In conclusion, the majority of participating parents reported increased knowledge of effective co-parenting strategies and of personal insight/responsibility. Future research should seek to identify and address the needs of children and parents as they correlate with each other.

Acknowledgements: I would like to acknowledge Dr. Neece, Dr. Vermeersch, Dr. Boyd, and my family and friends for their guidance and support throughout my academic journey.

Kelley Phan, PsyD

The E-FASST Workbook: A Supplement to Youth ADHD Treatment

While most pharmacological and psychosocial treatments developed for ADHD have demonstrated efficacy in reducing symptoms in treatment settings, overall, psychosocial interventions have not shown consistent generalization of positive effects to non-treatment settings. The literature suggests that targeting executive functioning skills and social interaction skills can increase generalization. The Executive-Functioning and Social Skills Training [E-FASST] Workbook provides information, resources, and interventions that specifically target these foundational skills and guides the structuring of inter-setting collaboration procedures.

Hooding by: *Cung N. Phan and Elizabeth Le-Phan (parents)*

Sonya Young, PsyD

Child Suicidality: Expanded Model of Childhood Risk Factors for Suicidal Behavior

Suicide among preadolescent children has become a growing public health concern, rising to the second leading cause of death for this age group in the U.S. (AAS, 2017). However, few studies have focused on suicide and suicidal behavior in this population (Soole et al., 2014). This review examined literature regarding risk/protective factors for suicidal behavior among preadolescent children and proposed a model depicting these relationships in order to better inform assessment, treatment, and prevention.

Acknowledgements: *A huge THANK YOU to all who made this possible: my family most of all, but also my professors, supervisors, and peers. We did it!*

Hooding by: *Donnie Young (husband)*

Amanda Mendez, PsyD

The Development of a Therapeutic Alliance Focused Intervention

The study explored the role of beliefs about whether smoking controls appetite/weight play in moderating the relationship between body dissatisfaction and weight control smoking, controlling for race/ethnicity, smoking, and BMI. There were significant relationships among beliefs about the effectiveness of smoking to help control appetite/weight, body dissatisfaction, and weight control smoking behaviors among smokers. Incorporating psychoeducation about consequences of smoking and its ineffectiveness to control appetite/weight into smoking interventions may reduce these beliefs.

Acknowledgements: *My husband, Kyle, my parents, my friends and family—thank you for encouraging me to follow my dreams.*

Hooding by: *Kyle Mendez (husband)*



Psychology

Doctor of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology

Britan Heavrin, PhD

An Examination of the Neural Basis of Self-Reflectivity in Schizophrenia

Self-reflectivity is crucial in building connections with others. This study used brainwave activity to investigate the neural basis of self-reflectivity in individuals with psychosis. We found that specific frequencies of brainwave activity differed between healthy individuals and those with psychosis (e.g., theta) and some frequencies (e.g., theta and beta) were uniquely related to interview measures of self-reflectivity. Investigations of self-reflectivity have direct implications for improving treatment and quality of life for those experiencing psychosis.

Acknowledgements: *I would like to thank my family and loved ones for their endless support, specifically my husband, who never stopped believing in me.*

Hooding by: Philip Heavrin (husband)

Alexander Larson, PhD

Religious Orientation, Social Identity, and Reactions to Religious Disaffiliation

As Americans increasingly report identifying as nonreligious, it is likely that more church members may witness religious disaffiliation. Backlash from church members regarding a peer's disaffiliation has been cited as influencing a continuing rejection of faith. This research assessed the influence of pertinent personal and social processes involved in church members' attitude formation towards religious disaffiliates. Religious fundamentalism and ingroup identification predicted endorsement of stereotyped, negative attitudes towards religious disaffiliates, exemplifying the Black Sheep Effect.

Hooding by: Dorothy Grant (mother)

Gabriela Bolivar, PhD

Sociocultural Pressures, Thin Ideal Internalization, Body Appreciation, & Eating Pathology in Women

The aim of this study was to examine the structural relations among sociocultural appearance pressures, thin ideal internalization, body appreciation, and eating pathology in a diverse sample of college-aged women. Notably, body appreciation predicted lower eating pathology and mediated the relationship between thin ideal internalization and eating pathology. Findings highlight the importance of considering positive body image when exploring the mechanisms by which appearance pressures influence thin ideal internalization and eating pathology in diverse populations.

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Hooding by: Fernando and Margot Bolivar (parents)

Dean Lim, PhD

Fatalism, Self-Efficacy, and Treatment Adherence among Anglo and Latino Americans with Type 2 Diabetes

This study examined the role of fatalism and self-efficacy in diabetes self-care and HbA1c among culturally diverse patients with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus. We hypothesized that diabetes fatalism would predict diabetes self-care directly and/or indirectly through the effect of diabetes self-efficacy. Diabetes fatalism was, indeed, predictive of poor diabetes self-care. Additionally, higher diabetes self-efficacy was predictive of better diabetes self-care. There was no indirect effect of fatalism on diabetes self-care through self-efficacy.

Joshua Nwosu, PhD

The Emotion Regulation Dysfunction System among Adolescents with Deliberate Self-Harm

Biosocial theory explains the development of Borderline Personality Disorder. While emotion dysregulation and other symptoms present in adolescence, few studies examined biosocial theory among clinical adolescents. This cross sectional study tested biosocial theory among 177 adolescents with deliberate self-harm, in an intensive outpatient program. Path analysis with full information maximum likelihood estimation was used to estimate the model fit and path coefficients. While the model fit the data, emotion regulation was not a significant mediator.

Acknowledgements: Thank you SOAR/SHIELD lab, dissertation committee, family, peers, and God. Your formal and informal counsel and support means so much. I love you all.

Hooding by: Dr. Freeman (chairperson)

Samantha Martinez, PhD

Body Dissatisfaction, Perceived Consequences of Smoking, and Weight Control Smoking

The study explored the role beliefs about whether smoking controls appetite/weight play in moderating the relationship between body dissatisfaction and weight control smoking, controlling for race/ethnicity, smoking, and BMI. There were significant relationships among beliefs about the effectiveness of smoking to help control appetite/weight, body dissatisfaction, and weight control smoking behaviors among smokers. Incorporating psychoeducation about consequences of smoking and its ineffectiveness to control appetite/weight into smoking interventions may reduce these beliefs.

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Hooding by: Laura Escalante (mother)

Denise Tran, PhD

Mediators of the Relationship between Mindfulness and E-cigarette Use

While the use of e-cigarettes continues to rise, their long-term effects remain largely unknown. The objective is to test whether mindfulness is a protective factor against e-cigarette use through its effect on variables related to cigarette smoking. Analyses revealed that mindfulness was not associated with e-cigarette use and negative affect, emotion regulation, stress, and distress tolerance did not mediate this relationship. Future research should prioritize prevention efforts among adolescents with whom e-cigarette use remains high.

Acknowledgements: *To my mother, father, brother, and loving husband: it's been quite the journey. Thank you for always encouraging me when I needed it the most.*

Hooding by: *Don Tran (father)*

Alison Tan, PhD

Adverse Childhood Experiences and Depressive Symptoms: Protective Effects of Flavonoids

Plant based diets rich in flavonoids may buffer the effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on depression through neuroprotective mechanisms. Our data suggests that ACEs seem to increase stress reactivity and flavonoids can decrease the impact of stress via antioxidants to lead to fewer depressive symptoms. A varied diet rich in flavonoids may have positive effects on mental health after adversity and trauma experiences.

Acknowledgements: *Thank you, Dr. Morton, for all the guidance you provided me throughout my graduate career and parents for your love, patience, and support!*



Counseling and Family Sciences

Doctor of Philosophy in Family Studies

Doctor of Philosophy in Systems, Families, and Couples

Dayanne (Danna) Carter, PhD

Systems, Families, and Couples

Relationships for Social Change:

A Longitudinal Examination of a Promotora-led Program for Socioeconomic Mobility

This study explored the use of a community health worker (CHW) approach in the Launch Initiative, a pilot study developed to assist economically disadvantaged families in the County of San Bernardino to gain better employment and vocational opportunities. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used to assess socioeconomic changes over time. Results indicate significant changes linked to employment, working alliance, and wellness. By offering families access to CHWs who share similar cultural backgrounds and insights linked to the challenges of navigating the systems of employment, the Launch program helped support socioeconomic mobility among participants.

Acknowledgements: *To my parents, Luzinete and Zuilton—this work is for you.*

Hooding by: *Dr. Distelberg (chairperson) and Dr. Zephon Lister (program director)*

Se-Anne Chance, PhD

Family Studies

Youth At-Risk Behaviors Within the School System in Trinidad and Tobago

This study examined the prevalence of school misconduct and risk and protective factors related to substance use, antisocial behavior, and violence perpetration. Adolescents (N=529) from 11 Trinidadian high-risk secondary schools were surveyed. About two-thirds of students reported substance use. More than half engaged in/or witnessed violence perpetration and/or antisocial behavior. Family and individual, but not school, risk and protective factors significantly predicted adolescent risk behavior and misconduct. Implications include the need for school-facilitated family-based interventions.

Acknowledgements: *Drs. Curtis Fox and Zephon Lister, other committee members, Belinda Isaac-Batiste and Patricia Hinds, close relatives and friends, and staff of the Counseling and Family Sciences Department.*

Hooding by: *Wayne Richardson (brother) and Jenny Richardson-Bruce (sister)*



Social Work and Social Ecology

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Policy and Social Research

Lisa Lares-Castro, PhD

Psychosocial Needs of Released Long-Term Incarcerated Older Adults

More than ever, long-term incarcerated older adults are being released into their communities. Many find themselves ill prepared to function in a society that has changed significantly during their incarceration. A mixed method study was conducted to assess older adults' psychosocial needs post-incarceration. Results suggest that older adults post-release struggle with challenges of ageism regarding employment, housing, and utilizing technology. As a result, many older adults released from parole seriously consider reoffending as an option.

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Hooding by: *Alex Castro (husband)*