

# AMIR ABU-SAMAHA

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Texas Tech University, Department of Psychological Sciences

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## EDUCATION

- 2020-2022 University of California, Santa Cruz  
 B.A. Psychology  
 Graduated with Highest Honors: *Summa Cum Laude*; 4.0 GPA, 4.0 Major GPA  
 Relevant Coursework: *Research Internship in Social Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, Developmental Psychopathology, Quantitative Psychological Data Analysis, Qualitative Research Methods in Psychology, Advanced Developmental Research and Writing, Human Development as a Cultural Process, Latinx Psychology, Moral Development, Health Psychology, Perspectives on Autism, Psychology and Law*
- 2018-2020 Sierra College  
 A.A.T. Psychology  
 Graduated with Honors: 3.73 GPA, 3.86 Major GPA  
 Relevant Coursework: *Abnormal Psychology, Elementary Statistics, Social Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Biopsychology, Biopsychology Lab, Human Sexuality*

## AWARDS AND HONORS:

- 2021-2022 Outstanding Undergraduate Researcher Award - UC Santa Cruz Psychology Department (Nominated by Dr. Saskias Casanova)
- 2022 Graduated with Highest Honors (Summa Cum Laude) - UC Santa Cruz
- 2020-2022 Dean's Honors, UC Santa Cruz
- 2020 Graduated with Honors, Sierra College
- 2019-2020 President's Honor Roll, Sierra College
- 2018-2019 Dean's List, Sierra College

## MANUSCRIPTS:

Elliott, L., Singer, J., Rerick, P., Kelley, J., **Abu-Samaha, A.** Molinar-Lopez, V., and Neugebauer, V. (submitted). *Neurocognitive Functioning in Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Individuals in Rural West Texas: Understanding the Influence of Age and Education.*

**Abu-Samaha, A.**, McLean, E., Weller, D., Kelley, J., Schmidt, A.T., and Singer, J. (submitted). *Comparing Public Perceptions of Child and Adult Grief Responses to Familial Incarceration.*

## **CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:**

Turner, C.E., **Abu-Samaha, A.**, Singer, J., Neugebauer, V., & Molinar-Lopez, V. *Examining the Relationship Between Hypertension and Neurocognitive Functioning in a Unique Rural Sample* [Poster Presentation]. Submitted to the Texas Tech University Undergraduate Research Conference (URC).

**Abu-Samaha, A.**, & Victor, S.E. (2024, April). *Comparing Functions of Suicidal Ideation and Nonsuicidal Self-Injury in an Acute Inpatient and Nationwide Sample* [Poster Presentation]. Suicide Research Symposium (SRS).

McLean, E., **Abu-Samaha, A.**, Weller, D., Singer, J. (2024, April). *Grieving a Loss to Incarceration: An Examination of Grief Responses and Public Perceptions of Family Members of Incarcerated Individuals* [Symposium]. Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC).

Hussein, M., Casanova, S., & **Abu-Samaha, A.** (2023, June). *Interpersonal Experiences, Strengths, and Barriers for Black Muslim Undergraduates* [Poster Presentation]. Society for Qualitative Inquiry in Psychology (SQIP).

**Abu-Samaha, A.**, Bianco, A., & Victor, S.E. (2023, April). *Categories of Suicide Exposure: Relation to Suicide Outness in Self-Injurious Young Adults* [Poster Presentation]. Suicide Research Symposium (SRS).

**Abu-Samaha, A.**, & Victor, S.E. (2023, April). *Analyzing Negative Life Experiences of Individuals Meeting Nonsuicidal Self-Injury Disorder Criteria* [Poster Presentation]. Southwestern Psychological Association (SWPA).

Casanova, S., Alonso Blanco, V., & **Abu-Samaha, A.** (2023, March). *Fostering belonging for primarily Latinx adolescents in a Youth Participatory Action Research class* [Poster Presentation]. Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD).

Casanova, S., Alonso Blanco, V., & **Abu-Samaha, A.**, Moreto, J., Al-saegh, S., & Garcia, D. (2022, October). *Conexiones Culturales: Creating intergenerational knowledge and cultivating community through a Youth Participatory Action Research Partnership*. All-In: Co-Creating Knowledge for Justice Conference.

## **RESEARCH EXPERIENCE/POSITIONS**

### **Clinical Research Coordinator (July 2023 - Present)**

Grief and Response to Illness into Late Life Lab

Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX

*Director and Principal Investigator:* Jonathan Singer, Ph.D.

**Studies**

- Reducing suicide risk among aging caregivers of persons with AD/ADRD: Adapting, implementing, and evaluating Dialectical Behavior Therapy skills training interventions (R15AG080446-01A1)
  - *Protocol and consent development, Recruitment*
- Grief and Coping in Adolescents Following Loss
  - *Recruitment, Data collection, Scheduling*
- Naltrexone Treatment for Prolonged Grief Disorder: A Pilot Study (NCT06140420)
  - *Protocol and consent development/modifications, Recruitment, Consenting, Administering clinical interviews (SCIP), Coordinating fMRI visits, Data collection, Scheduling, Data organization, Survey development, Follow-ups*
- Implementing Individual Mental Health Treatment and Respite for Informal Caregivers of Individuals with Dementia
  - *Leading respite sessions, Psychophysiological data collection/organization/analysis, Recruitment and scheduling*
- Grieving the Loss of a Family Member to Incarceration: A Qualitative Analysis
  - *Recruitment*
- Neural Correlates of Pre-Death Grief and Psychosocial Distress in Family Members of Individuals with Dementia
  - *Recruitment, Coordinating fMRI visits*
- Reducing Pre-Death Grief, Burden, and Stress in Informal Caregivers: A Group and Individual Therapy Approach
  - *Recruitment, Data organization*
- Improving Quality of Life in Persons Living in Rural Texas
  - *Recruitment*

### **Study-Specific Responsibilities**

- Administrating a randomized clinical trial on the efficacy of a drug for prolonged grief disorder
- Supporting protocol development for a study on dialectical behavior therapy skills groups to reduce suicidal ideation in family caregivers of dementia patients
- Providing respite care for family caregivers of persons with dementia
- Developing an fMRI neuroimaging protocol within a drug trial
- *Clinical Interviews Administered: Structured Clinical Interview for Prolonged Grief Disorder (SCIP)*
- Managing multidisciplinary research teams
- Developing EC Stroop and Grief Elicitation protocols and stimuli for fMRI neuroimaging scans
- Coordinating fMRI scans
- Mentoring and supervising undergraduates
- Managing and creating surveys in Qualtrics and Redcap
- Administering surveys
- Data collection and entry
- Consent and debriefing
- Writing, editing, and submitting manuscripts for publication
- Submitting IRB modifications
- Editing and conducting literature reviews for grants
- Tracking participant outcomes across multiple studies
- Collecting, cleaning, and organizing physiological fitbit data
- Facilitating group activities for wellbeing of participants with dementia

- Cleaning and organizing data
- Following up and scheduling participants for visits across multiple research studies
- Submitted abstract to present manuscript findings at a national conference
- Community recruitment at local events

**Additional Responsibilities**

- Managing and editing lab website

**Clinical Research Coordinator (July 2023 - Present)**

Pediatric Health, Affect, and Biobehavioral Research Lab

Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX

*Director and Principal Investigator:* Caroline Cummings, Ph.D.

**Studies**

- Grief and Coping in Adolescents Following Loss
  - *Recruitment, Data collection, Scheduling*
- Patient Voices to Inform a Physical Activity Intervention for Hispanic Teens
  - *Qualitative interview transcription*

**Study-Specific Responsibilities**

- Administrating a clinical study investigating outcomes for bereaved adolescents receiving Trauma and Grief Component Therapy for Adolescents (TGCT-A) combined with caregiver Behavioral Parent Training
- Attending weekly supervision for TGCT-A training

**Clinical Research Coordinator (July 2022 - July 2023)**

Tracking Risk Over Time Laboratory

Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX

*Director and Principal Investigator:* Sarah E. Victor, Ph.D.

**Studies**

- Dynamic Regulatory Processes in the Transition from Suicidal Ideation to Action: The Roles of Cognitive Control, Emotion-Related Impulsivity, and Sleep in the Context of Negative Affect Experiences (R21MH124794)
  - *Recruitment, Screening, Data Collection, Clinical Interviews, Reliability Coding, Safety Planning, Authorship of National Conference Proposal*
- Best practices in assessment of self-injurious thoughts and behaviors in daily life
  - *Data Analysis, Authorship of Conference Presentations, Reliability Coding*
- SONA Mass Survey - NSSI and SI follow-up study
  - *Survey development*

**Study-Specific Responsibilities**

- Recruited, screened, interviewed, surveyed, and conducted follow-up assessments with suicidal adult participants from an inpatient acute psychiatric unit for research on psychological and physiological short-term risk factors for suicidal ideation
- Set up, trained, and tracked participant survey responses through ecological momentary assessment (EMA)
- *Clinical Interviews:* Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS), The Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-V Disorders (SCID) Alcohol (AUD) and substance (SUD)

use disorder assessment, Structured Interview for DSM-V Personality (SIDP) Borderline Personality Disorder Assessment.

- *Cognitive assessments*: Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) and Reverse Digit Span (RDS) during baseline
- Facilitated training and implementation of physiological sleep/movement tracking (actigraphy)
- Data collection, entry, and analysis with Qualtrics and SPSS
- Data management and storage
- Organized data for submission to the National Institute of Mental Health
- Consent and debriefing
- Safety planned with suicidal participants prior to discharge from inpatient care
- Supported development of a Qualtrics self-report survey on nonsuicidal self-injury and suicidal ideation in Texas Tech University students
- Facilitated participation payment, incentives, and accommodations
- Designed and presented independent studies using lab datasets to analyze data for conference presentations
- Reliability coded C-SSRS, SCID SUD/AUD, and SIDP BPD interviews from prior studies

#### **Additional Responsibilities**

- Organized a department-wide clothing drive to alleviate a clothing shortage at an inpatient psychiatric facility

### **Undergraduate and Post-Baccalaureate Research Assistant (April 2021-July 2023)**

Migration, Identity, and Education Laboratory

University of California, Santa Cruz

*Director and Principal Investigator*: Saskias Casanova, Ph.D.

#### **Studies**

- Immigrant origin students, Youth Participatory Action Research, & community knowledge
  - *Participant Recruitment/Screening, Ethnographic/Semi-Structured Interview/Survey Data collection, Qualitative interview transcription, Qualitative Data analysis, Co-Authorship of National Conference Presentations*
- Black Muslim Worldmaking: Race, Religion, and Gender in the Lives of Black Muslims
  - *Data analysis*
- SSUMS: Socio-ecological and social-cognitive underpinnings of math difficulties for Latinx students
  - *Data Analysis*

#### **Study-Specific Responsibilities**

- Learning about the struggles and strengths of migrants in their daily lives, and the kinds of community interventions that can support these groups through mixed-methods research
- Conducting literature searches and reviews
- Editing and implementing interview and survey protocols for child, adolescent, and adult participants
- Reporting weekly on research progress
- Coding and analyzing participant responses
- Collecting and analyzing data on participatory action research
- Child/adolescent and parent participant recruitment

- Interview transcription and analysis
- Often able to maneuver the direction of youth participatory action research to adjust to circumstantial changes
- Co-Presenting a national conference presentation on the intersectional lived experiences of Black Muslim Undergraduates (thematic analysis and literature review)
- Presenting aspects and outcomes of youth participatory action research at national conferences
- Analyzing data for a manuscript on Latinx children's math anxiety

**Additional Responsibilities**

- Presenting career advice on post-baccalaureate research opportunities

**Undergraduate Research Assistant (June-August 2021)**

Emotion, Health, and Psychophysiology Laboratory

University of California, San Francisco

*Director and Principal Investigator:* Wendy Berry Mendes, Ph.D.

**Studies**

- Examining the reciprocal effects of racial discrimination and sleep on cardiovascular functioning: An experimental approach (R01HL142051)
  - *Data Collection and Analysis, Participant Recruitment and Screening*
- Psychology and Medicine: Translational research on stress, behavior, and disease (T32MH019391)
  - *Data Organization/Management*
- Stress Measurement Platform (Samsung Research International)
  - *Data Collection*

**Study-Specific Responsibilities**

- Facilitated lab experiments in multiple clinical studies involving social experiences, stress, sleep, resilience, and well-being of minoritized populations
- Implemented behavioral and physiological coding of participant responses for a study on clinical interventions for depressed women
- Entered and organized data using Excel
- Administered surveys on socio-emotional wellbeing
- Administered computer tasks for participants
- Applied physiological sensors such as: actigraphy watches, skin conductance sensors, impedance sensors, blood pressure cuffs, and Holter monitors (electrocardiogram)
- Psychophysiological Data Analysis: Mindware
- Collected and analyzed heart rate, heart rate variance, impedance measurements, skin conductance, and sleep data using psychophysiological software
- Recruited adult participants
- Learned about the value of health psychology, social rejection, stress, sleep, resilience, and clinical research, as well as how it applies to vulnerable populations

**Additional Responsibilities**

- Developed and presented a mock proposal for a clinical psychophysiological experiment on the functions of non-suicidal self-injurious behavior in adolescents

**CLINICAL EXPERIENCE/POSITIONS**

**Respite Session Leader (July 2023 - Present)**

Grief and Response to Illness into Late Life Lab

Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX

*Supervisor:* Jonathan Singer, Ph.D

**Responsibilities**

- Implemented respite services for participants with dementia and their families
- Ensured that care standards were consistent with caregiver desires
- Utilized applied behavioral analysis skills to calmly and unintrusively redirect dangerous/disruptive behavior
- Supervised undergraduate research assistants to ensure they were meeting expectations of standards of care
- Observed needs and interests of dementia participants to actively adapt respite sessions for full satisfaction

**Behavior Interventionist (January 2023 - July 2023)**

Lighthouse Learning Center

*Supervisor:* Mari Cerda, Ph.D.

**Responsibilities**

- Implemented trauma-responsive client-led applied behavior analysis skill-based treatment plans for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and related diagnoses
- Collected and interpreted data on the implementation of treatment programs and client behavior with primary targets of communication, collaboration, and preventing severe problem behavior
- Implemented Dialectical Behavioral Therapy targets such as interpersonal effectiveness, emotion regulation, mindfulness, and distress tolerance
- Implemented behavior management by teaching/implementing coping strategies and de-escalation techniques with key concepts of safety, empathy, and rapport building
- Provided detailed insight for clinical staff and family members about client assessments, treatment plans, and session structure
- Received frequent supervision, feedback, and advising from clinical supervisors (Board Certified Behavior Analysts)
- Implemented and collected data on social skills training for groups of children with autism spectrum disorder and related disorders

**Behavior Interventionist (August 2021 - June 2022)**

Santa Cruz ABA

*Supervisor:* Aaron Palmer

**Responsibilities**

- Implemented applied behavior analysis treatment plans at clients' homes to improve the well-being of a wide variety of children with autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and comorbidities
- Collected and interpreted data on the implementation of treatment programs and client behavior
- Implemented behavior management by teaching/implementing coping strategies and de-escalation techniques
- Provided detailed insight for clinical staff and family members about client assessments, treatment plans, and session structure

- Received frequent supervision, feedback, and advising from clinical supervisors (Board Certified Behavior Analysts)

### **Behavior Interventionist (July 2019 - August 2021)**

Therapeutic Pathways

*Supervisor:* Weston Rieland

- Implemented applied behavior analysis interventions for autistic children, mainly in a structured clinical setting and in clients' homes
- Worked with clinical supervisors (Board Certified Behavior Analysts) to implement behavior protocols and programming
- Implemented behavior management by teaching/implementing coping strategies and de-escalation techniques
- Collected intensive data on client behavior and programming results
- Implemented client-specific programming and behavior management, tracking clients' cognition, language, attending, maladaptive behavior, self-help skills, and communication
- Implemented and collected data on social skills training for groups of children with autism spectrum disorder and related disorders

### **SPECIALIZED SKILLS**

- Ecological Momentary Assessment set up and tracking
- Psychophysiology: Actigraphy set up and data collection, psychophysiological data analysis
- Qualitative and quantitative data collection
- Qualitative and quantitative data analysis
- Experienced in participant recruitment, communication, and screening for research in a wide variety of age groups and populations
- Experienced in implementing and scoring structured clinical interviews
- Experienced in developing research designs
- Substantial clinical experience treating and implementing clinical interviews with disordered individuals, growing a nuanced understanding of the psychopathology, assessment, and treatment of neurodivergent individuals
- Knowledgeable about numerous methods of assessment, treatment, and research of disordered populations, along with their risk factors, resilience, and etiology
- Survey design and advanced features through Qualtrics
- Data analysis through SPSS
- Data management and organization
- Study tracking, data collection/analysis, and consort design through Excel
- Advanced academic reading experience

### **ADDITIONAL SKILLS**

- Highly cooperative and receptive to input and feedback
- Strong leadership and initiative within projects
- Excellent communication skills in labs, classes, and clinical settings
- Highly inquisitive

**PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

- Southwestern Psychological Association (SWPA)
- Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC)