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Active Grant Projects
and Summary Table
May 2026

Jerry M. Lewis, M.D. Mental Health Research Foundation is a nonprofit organization devoted to research and education. *The primary area of emphasis is on the role of interpersonal relationships in psychological development along the continuum from mental health to mental illness.*

Couple, parent-child, and family system relationships are of special interest. Other relationships such as doctor-patient, teacher-student, or child care provider-child are of interest to the degree that they illuminate basic relationship characteristics and psychological development.

A complementary research interest involves scientific evaluation of relationship-centered service and educational interventions and programs. The Foundation's educational activities are directed at health care professionals, educators, service program professionals, and the public.

Lewis Foundation announced the availability of small grants for certain types of mental health research, education, and service projects in January 1998. The following is a list of active grant projects. Each listing includes the grant title, principal investigator, institution, funding amount, brief summary, date the grant was approved, and anticipated date of completion of the project.

Detailed descriptions of completed research projects Funded by the Foundation may be mailed to you by calling 214/388-0451or e-mailing: JMLewisfoundation@att.net

GA2022-010 ***A Social-ecological Approach to Understanding Sleep Health and Family Functioning in Hispanic/Latino Families with Young Children, Heidi Kane, Ph.D. and Danica Slavish, Ph.D.***
The University of Texas at Dallas $30,000

This reapplication examines the associations between sleep and family environment. Sleep consistently predicts responses to stress and is related to parenting. After a night of disturbed sleep, individuals have more difficulty concentrating, maintaining attention, and regulating emotions- all of which are essential for effective parenting and family functioning. Up to now, no studies have examined how parental sleep is associated with next day parent/child interactions. This study will use a multimethod interdisciplinary approach to understand how factors across the social context are influenced by Hispanic/Latino parental sleep.

These researchers will assess demographic information and personal, family, neighborhood characteristics during a home visit. During a subsequent ten-day observational period they will assess self-reported sleep, family climate, and stress with daily surveys. Objective sleep will be measured with wrist actigraphy. Parents activity spaces (where they go and what they are exposed to) will be measured with GPS tracking.

The primary aims of this study are:
(1) to determine the association of built family factors (e.g. bedroom features) and the bidirectional associations of social family factors (e.g. support, conflict, routines) with the Hispanic/ Latino parents' sleep. (2) To determine how family social climate (i.e. support and conflict) interacts with individual (e.g. daily discrimination) and community level factors (e.g., noise, light, housing density, crime) to predict Hispanic/Latino parents' sleep. (3) To determine how family social climate (i.e. support and conflict) interacts with Hispanic/Latino parents' sleep to predict parents' next-day parent-child interactions, parenting stress, and responses to stress.

They plan recruit 150 primary care givers who identify as Hispanic/Latino with at least one child 1-5 years old. These researchers think that this project will produce results which will help develop culturally appropriate and targeted interventions specific to the Hispanic/Latino parents.
January 2023 – December 2026

GA2023-011 ***Affective Cognition and Interpersonal Functioning Among Adults With and Without Depression, Matthew Hutnyan, B.S., Shawn McClintock, Ph.D.***
University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, $24,000

This project is added on to an ongoing National Institute of Mental Health funded study entitled, "Emotional Cognition: Establishing Constructs and Neurobehavioral Mechanisms in Older Adults with Depression" (ENSURE). The primary objective of this proposal is to determine how affective cognition and interpersonal functioning are related among adults with and without depression. The secondary objectives are to establish whether affective cognition is uniquely associated with interpersonal functioning and how the association differs with age among individuals with and without depression. They aim to enroll 30 participants with MDD and 30 without MDD from the 120 participants enrolled in the ENSURE study.

This project will add measures to the ENSURE study including a Social Adjustment Scale, the Inventory for Personal Problems, a Social Network Index, and an Interpersonal Support Evaluation. These researchers think that investigating the connection between cognitive abilities and interpersonal functioning will provide important information to better understand how a person's cognitive ability impacts relationships and moods.
January 2024 – September 2026

GA2024-001 ***Understanding the Impacts of Trauma and Family Factors on Treatment for Suicidal Adolescents: A Mixed Methods Approach, Savannah Krantz, B.A., Sunita Stewart, Ph.D.,*** *The University of Texas Southwestern Children's Medical Center, $29,115*

This study will investigate family factors that promote or hinder positive outcomes for suicidal adolescents with trauma. Despite evidence that family functioning and resilience are protective against the development of PTSD following trauma, the influence of these factors on treatment outcomes among suicidal adolescents with trauma has not been explored. The aims of this study are 1) to investigate the effects of trauma and symptoms on treatment outcomes of adolescents in an intensive outpatient program for suicidal adolescents, 2) to explore family functioning as a moderator of the relationship between trauma and treatment outcomes, and 3) to investigate adolescent and patient beliefs about the link of trauma to suicidality and to explore the experience of parents responding to trauma and suicidality. Participants will be adolescents receiving treatment in a six-week intensive outpatient program for suicidal adolescents. Quantitative data will be collected at program entry and exit, and semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of adolescents and their parents who endorsed having expressed trauma. Instrumentation includes quantitative measurements of post-traumatic stress disorder, family functioning, resilience, suicidal ideation, and depression. The qualitative measure involves a semi-structured interview with each adolescent and their respective parents.

These researchers think that this project will fill gaps in the literature by uncovering the effects of trauma on intensive treatment outpatient for suicidality and the protective effects of family functioning among suicidal adolescents with trauma.
May 2024 – January 2027

GA2024-006 ***Parental Perceptions of the Role of Media in Their Children's Lives, Aesha J. John, Ph.D., Texas Christian University, and Samantha Bates, Ph.D., The Ohio State University, $23,100***

This study proposes to examine the link between young children's media use and the quality of their relationship with their parents. These researchers will gather information from parents of 3–8-year-old children and various aspects of their children's and their own media use and examine how these factors are related to closeness and conflict in the parent-child relationship. They hypothesize that the more frequently the children are engaged in screen related activities the more likely there will be parent-child conflict and a decrease in closeness.

They will gather data from 100 parents of 3–8-year-old children. Instrumentation will involve self-report of the child's engagement in screen activities, the parent-child relationship, and parental beliefs about acceptable media use.
September 2024 – December 2026

GA2024-007 ***Infants' Processing of Vocal Emotions: The Impact of Temperament and Maternal Interaction," Melanie Spence, Ph.D.,*** *University of Texas at Dallas, $34,501*

The purpose of this research is to study if 9-month-old infants can distinguish vocal signals conveying different emotional messages in speech, to explore the contributions of infant and maternal temperament and mother-infant interaction styles to the processing of vocal emotional messages, and to assess if 9-month-old infants' processing of vocal emotions is related to their communication skills at 15-months.

Seventy-two infants and mothers will participate in two experimental procedures and a free play session at the Callier Research Center. Mothers will also complete a follow-up questionnaire when their infant is 15-months of age.
September 2024 – December 2027

GA2025-002 ***The Impact of Parental Adverse Childhood Experiences in the NICU: A Mixed Methods Study, Joann Chen, MBA, Veronica Edgar, Ph.D.,***
UT Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas, TX, $31,151

This study seeks to identify targets of intervention to support parents in neo-natal intensive care units who have experienced childhood trauma. These researchers hypothesize that those parents with greater Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) will be associated with greater needs, lower satisfaction of met needs, and greater symptoms of anxiety, depression and acute stress. They also hypothesize that psychological symptoms and need satisfaction will mediate the relationship between the parental ACEs and parental infant attachment.

This project also involves a qualitative and quantitative study. The qualitative study involves a semi-structured interview of 30 parents for psychological symptoms, needs and satisfaction with care in the NICU as well as attachment with those with various levels of ACEs. The quantitative study will consist of 200 parents completing self-report questionnaires assessing childhood trauma, needs in the NICU, depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, acute stress, and parent-child attachment.

These researchers feel that this study addresses critical gaps in understanding the impact of a parent's early trauma on their infants in a high-risk environment and will result in identifying targets for interventions.
July 2025 – September 2027

GA2025-007 ***Mental Health Outcomes in Black and Latine Mothers of Autistic Children: Risk and Protective Factors, Ekene Nwosisi, B.S., Katherine Bellone Mount, Ph.D., Laura Alba, Ph.D.***
UT Southwestern Medical Center, $13,188

This study explores the mental health outcomes of Black and Latine mothers of children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This research aims to identify the risk and protective factors associated with maternal mental health within this population. These researchers will examine the association between maternal stress, depression, and anxiety and compare the average scores across the symptom severity level of the ASD diagnosis. In addition, qualitative interviews will be conducted to learn more about the mother's experience navigating the barriers to care and understand protective factors that facilitate coping with stress. Instrumentation will include measures of maternal stress, depression, and anxiety. The subjects will be a group of 34 mothers of autistic children from an autism clinic in Dallas.

These researchers feel that this study could better inform mental health practices for racial and ethnic mothers of children with autism.
September 2025 – December 2026

GA2025-009 ***Love and Life on the Autism Spectrum: Understanding Romantic Relationships and Mental Health in Autistic Adults, Chrystyna Kouros, Ph.D.,*** *Southern Methodist University,* ***Naomi Ekas, Ph.D.,*** *Texas Christian University, $44,719*

There is little research on romantic relationships in couples in which one or both partners are autistic. This study aims to examine the association between romantic relationship functioning and mental health among these couples and it will assess the reliability and validity of the Lewis Scales with these couples. These researchers will use self-report measures of relationship satisfaction and intimacy as well as the Lewis Scales. They will recruit 150 adults and their romantic partners. For purposes of validating the Lewis Scales they will also train coders in the Mangelsdorf coding system for couples.

This project is one of the first to examine relationship functioning and depression in neurodiverse couples using survey and observational data.
September 2025 – December 2028

GA2025-015 ***Interpersonal Relationships in Adolescents Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Andrea Warner-Czyz, Ph.D.,*** *The University of Texas at Dallas, $34,927*

This is a study of 31 deaf and hard of hearing adolescents and their caregivers investigating their interpersonal relationships. They ask, 1) what are the characteristics of conversation skills used by these adolescents within a social interaction task, 2) how do these conversational skills relate to social skills via self-report and parental report, and 3) how does communication, perspective taking, and executive functioning skills relate to the self-report, parent report, and observed characteristics?
January 2026 – May 2027

GA2025-017 ***Informing Functional and Health Outcomes of Care Partners in Electroconvulsive Therapy, Jack Kaufman, M.A., Shawn McClintock, Ph.D.,*** *University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, $16,225*

These researchers propose to characterize the daily challenges, quality of life, and psychiatric symptoms faced by carepartners or caregivers of loved ones who have been treated with electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). These researchers will use qualitative and quantitative approaches to assess the carepartners' psychiatric symptoms, health outcomes, interpersonal relationship dynamics, burden/burnout, quality of life, and well-being. The data will be collected multiple times during the six-week ECT treatment. These researchers feel that this project could lead to a better understanding of the carepartners' journey that will inform new targeted interventions.
January 2026 – October 2027

GA2026-001 ***"Student-Level Outcomes and Referral-System Impacts of a School-Based Peer Suicide Prevention Program." Angela Liegey Dougall, Ph.D.,*** *The University of Texas at Arlington, $34,991*

The Hope Squad is a peer support suicide prevention program used in over 2,000 high schools. The program involves designating certain trusted adults as Hope Squad advisors. These advisors then train a "squad" of student members to identify at risk peers and refer them to the adults.

These researchers plan to measure how the program effects student members' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors (outcome) and the community rates of suicide among high school-aged adolescents (impact).
May 2026 – August 2027

GA2026-005 ***"Moments that Matter: How Couples Constructively Navigate Triggers after Infidelity."***
Stephen F. Fife, Ph.D., Sura Sena Erbas Yigit, and Annalise Billings, *Texas Tech University, $30,457*

Infidelity between married partners remains a major challenge for couple therapists. The purpose of this study is to understand the process of navigating triggers of couples who stay together following infidelity. By conducting an in-depth analysis of participants' experiences navigating triggers, these researchers plan to develop a theoretical model of how couples can constructively manage such triggers.

Individual participants will be interviewed alone, while couple participants will be interviewed together, in a semi-structured interview. The interviews will be transcribed and coded. They hope that this will lead to a cohesive theoretical model which can help explain the process of how to navigate the triggers following infidelity. These results will help researchers, therapists, and couples to more clearly understand the process of healing.
May 2026 – April 2028

Summary Description of Funded Projects
May 1998 – May 2026

Grant Applications Received:	**369**
Grant Applications Approved:	**129**
Grant Funding Provided:	**$2,633,449**

Project Topics

Adolescent romantic relationships and psychological health
Affective cognition and interpersonal functioning among adults with and without depression
Assessment techniques for interpersonal relationships (2)
Attachment and self-mutilation
Brief, acceptance-based therapy for pregnant women with premature rupture of membranes
Brief intervention programs for school-aged children exposed to intimate partner violence
Children's responses to peer victimization (2)
Coherence of relationship narrative and couple competence
Critical thinking and individual differences
Developing an intervention to promote lethal means safety in suicidal adolescents
Development of a web-based intervention for at-risk adolescents for anxiety and depression within schools
Development of autonomy among youths with diabetes
Dyadic responding to stress and relationship functioning
Effects of peer victimization on biological functioning
Empathy in childhood relationships
Empathy in destabilizing relationships
Examining the efficacy of a phone application for safety planning in youth with suicidality
Examining the feasibility of a resiliency mental health application for adolescents
Failure of empathy in spousal abuse (2)
Family feeding relationships
Family system predictors of psychological well-being in middle childhood
How children evaluate information
How children with autism spectrum disorder understand and interpret marital conflict
Illness perceptions of patients with advanced stage cancer and their partners
Impact of a motivational interviewing intervention on mothers' visitation patterns in nicu
Impact of parental adverse childhood experiences in the nicu: a mixed methods study
Infant emotion regulation within the developing mother-child and father-child relationship
Infant perceptions of maternal technological distractions
Infant understanding of affective messages
Infants' processing of vocal emotions: the impact of temperament and maternal interaction
Influence of early victimization upon adult relationships
Influence of parental yelling
Influence of the family system on self-injurious behavior
Informing functional and health outcomes of care partners in electroconvulsive therapy
Interpersonal relationships and depression
Interpersonal relationships in adolescents who are deaf and hard of hearing
Interpersonal relationships in ptsd and depressive symptomatology in veterans
Interpersonal theory of suicide treatment approach to improve outcomes in suicidal youth
Investigations into the nature and consequences of parental yelling
Language development in children
Long-term consequences of being bullied: biological functioning effects on physical health
Longitudinal trajectories of parent support and their impact on the mental health of transgender youth
Love and life on the autism spectrum: understanding romantic relationships and mental health in autistic adults

Project Topics cont'd

Marriage, sleep and health
Mental health outcomes in black and latine mothers of autistic children: risk and protective factors
Mindfulness meditation to counteract self-control
Moments that matter: how couples constructively navigate triggers after infidelity
Oxytocin as a biomarker of social sensitivity and interpersonal functioning
Parental perception of child vulnerability in the nicu and developmental outcomes
Parental perceptions of the role of media in their children's lives
Paving the way to improved marital well-being
Peer relationships, gut microbiota, and health
Prediction of language disorders in children
Psychological and family factors in social aggression
Randomized control trial of a cellphone-based intervention to promote lethal means safety in suicidal adolescents
Relations between parent-child conflict styles and children's well-being
Relationship healing from infidelity
Relationships, school performance, and health in adolescence
Resilience among children and families at risk forum
Results of childhood versus spousal abuse
Role of parents' restrictive feeding practices
Role of parents in diabetes care
Social-ecological approach to understanding sleep health and family functioning in hispanic/latino families with young children
Tracking the early bilingual growth of spanish-speaking children
Transplant as a medical trauma
Understanding the impacts of trauma and family factors on treatment for suicidal adolescents
Understanding the role of social support in sexual and gender minority youth with eating disorders
Validation of the lewis couple & family evaluation scales in a community sample of families
Value violations and satisfaction in relationships: the value-consistent action measure
Why caregivers of severely abused children may refuse psychotherapy for the abused child

Treatment program evaluations:

Anger management training for probationers
Attention training for adhd preschoolers and their parents
Connections: a program to enhance peer support in refugee youth
Cooperative small group approach for students with learning differences
Counseling of voluntary and mandated agency clients
Couple functioning and treatment of chronic pain
Equine-assisted therapy in autism
Evaluation of a dating assertiveness training program for adolescent girls
Evaluation of an autism intervention (2)
Evaluation of juega conmigo (play with me) playful learning project
Evaluation of mindful self-care for caregivers
Evaluation of the playwisely intervention in autism
Family disaffiliation and treatment outcome
Family function and adolescent depression treatment
Family function and adolescent eating disorder treatment
Feasibility & pilot study of the ut southwestern virtue inventory for clinician excellence
Filial therapy training for abusive parents
Home instruction program for parents and at-risk preschoolers
Impact of home instruction program participation on maternal self-efficacy
Improving adolescent suicidal ideation through a standardized brief group sleep intervention
In-home parental training for abusive parents

Treatment program evaluations cont'd

Long term outcome of therapeutic community treatment (2)
Multimodal program impact on homeless/disturbed
Playful learning and parenting supports: impacts of the p*lay with me* program for young hispanic children at risk and their parents
Psychoeducational group therapy for bipolar patients
Psychoeducational group therapy for alzheimers caregivers
Psychoeducational program for caretakers of abused children
Psychoeducational program for diabetic adolescents and their parents
Psychoeducational program for parents adopting abused/neglected children
Randomized evaluation of a six-week grief curriculum for bereaved parents
Relationship-centered child care (2)
Second opportunity for success
Student-level outcomes and referral-system impacts of a school-based peer suicide prevention program
Support program for high risk hispanic families
Therapeutic assessment and treatment outcome
Therapy of children with autism

Project Settings

Austin Street Centre (3)
Autism Treatment Centers (2)
AVANCE-Dallas
Child Abuse Prevention Center
Child and Family Guidance Center
Child Care Group
Dallas Children's Advocacy Center (2)
Dallas County Community Supervision and Corrections Department
Duke University Medical Center, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
The Family Place (2)
First 3 Years – Julie Anne Mason Memorial Lecture (12)
Galaxy Counseling Center (2)
Lena Pope Home, Inc.
Life Net Community Behavioral Health Care
Sam Houston State University
Southern Methodist University, Psychology Department (9)
Texas Christian University, Department of Social Work
Texas Christian University, Developmental Research Lab
Texas Christian University, Psychology Department (2)
Texas Tech University, Couple, Marriage, and Family Therapy (CMFT) Program (2)
University of North Texas, Department of Rehabilitation & Health Services
University of North Texas, Psychology Department (7)
University of Notre Dame
University of Texas at Arlington, Psychology Department (12)
University of Texas at Dallas, The Center for Children and Families at UTD (10)
University of Texas at Dallas, School of Human Development (8)
University of Texas at Dallas, School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences (12)
UT Southwestern Medical Center, Center for Autism & Developmental Disorders
UT Southwestern Medical Center, Center for Depression, Research and Clinical Care
UT Southwestern Medical Center, Children's Medical Center (3)
UT Southwestern Medical Center, Department of Psychiatry (14)
UT Southwestern Medical Center, Department of Psychology (11)
UT Southwestern Medical Center, Parkland Pain Clinic
Winston School