

## Introduction

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The Behavioral Interventions Scholars (BIS) grant program supports dissertation research by advanced graduate students who are applying a behavioral economics or behavioral science lens to specific research questions relevant to social services programs and policies and other issues facing families with low incomes in the United States. As part of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation's [Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency research portfolio](#), these grants are intended to facilitate the completion of high-quality research projects that will add to the growing body of knowledge on effective behavioral interventions for Administration for Children and Families programs and populations. BIS also aims to build capacity in the research field by fostering mentoring relationships between high-quality doctoral students and faculty members. Seventeen grants have been awarded since the program began in 2017, including two new recipients who received an award in 2023 as part of the seventh round of funding. Current projects (active in 2022 -2025) are summarized in the chart below.

## BIS Grants Summary Chart

2023 Cohort				
GRANTEE INFORMATION			PROJECT INFORMATION	
BIS Grantee	Project Title	Key Staff	Key Research Questions or Project Goals	Primary Methods
<b>University of California, Los Angeles</b> <i>School of Management</i>	The Effects of Agency Frames on Resource Allocation: Moral Motives for Giving and Receiving Aid	Scholar: Ilana Brody  Advisor: Dr. Sherry Jueyu Wu	The project goal is to understand how to efficiently distribute government benefits or other means-tested resources by examining the attitudes and behaviors of “givers” – people who are involved in decisions around the distribution of such benefits (e.g., policymakers, voters) – and “receivers” – people who are eligible to receive benefits (e.g., potential recipients of food assistance).  The project will investigate three research questions: 1. Are givers more likely to support benefits distribution when they believe the benefit will improve receivers’ ability to be self-sufficient and financially independent (i.e., an independent model of agency)? 2. Are receivers more likely to seek out benefits when they believe the benefit will help them better support and connect with their communities (i.e., an interdependent model of agency)? 3. Do givers know how to frame the advantages of receiving benefits in a way that motivates potential receivers to seek the benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This project uses a mixed-methods approach to evaluate different strategies of framing the advantages of receiving benefits (i.e., independent vs. interdependent agency models) on the attitudes and behaviors of both givers and receivers.</li> <li>Phase 1 of the research will use online experiments to examine how givers’ perceptions of receivers’ ability to be self-sufficient affect givers’ attitudes and policy support for aid programs through a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) simulation exercise.</li> <li>In collaboration with the Center for Healthy Communities, phase 2 of the research will draw from qualitative data and field surveys about receiver barriers and motives to access SNAP. This phase will leverage online and field experiments to examine the effect of different frames on receivers’ attitudes towards and willingness to accept benefits (e.g., internet access from a digital inclusion company, SNAP).</li> <li>Phase 3 of the research will rely on field surveys and online experiments to examine whether givers’ (policy makers, staff providing SNAP benefits, voters) predictions of what motivates receivers to seek out benefits align with the findings from phase 2 regarding receivers’ motivations.</li> </ul>
<b>University of Missouri</b> <i>College of Education and Human Development</i>	Making Space to Connect: Examining Macroeconomic Factors, Cash Assistance, and Romantic Relationship Functioning in Low-Income Contexts	Scholar: Matthew Ogan  Advisor: Dr. J. Kale Monk	The project goal is to examine the role of public assistance benefits in the relationship between economic hardship and mothers’ mental health and romantic relationships.  The project will investigate two research questions: 1. Do state-level variations in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) benefits and cost of living contribute to differences in how the economic hardships experienced by low-income mothers impact their depressive symptoms and romantic relationship quality, conflict frequency, and instability (i.e., relationship wellbeing)? 2. Does receiving an unconditional cash gift further change the effects of state-level TANF and EITC benefits and cost of living on the impact of economic hardship on low-income mothers’ depressive symptoms and romantic relationship wellbeing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This project uses two datasets collected approximately 20 years apart.</li> <li>For both research questions, data on state-level TANF benefits come from the <a href="#">Center on Budget and Policy Priorities</a>, and EITC benefit data from the <a href="#">Tax Policy Center</a>. State-level cost of living data come from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis’ <a href="#">regional price parity data</a>.</li> <li>Research Question 1 will be tested using data from the <a href="#">Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study</a>, a national longitudinal study beginning in 1998. The project will examine state-level differences in public assistance benefits and cost of living as moderators of the relationship between economic hardship and the mental health and romantic relationships of low-income mothers.</li> <li>Research Question 2 will use data from <a href="#">Baby’s First Years</a>, a randomized controlled trial of 1,000 low-income mothers in four states beginning in 2019, to assess the effects of economic hardship on mental health and relationship wellbeing over time. The model will also assess whether an experimental unconditional cash gift changes the effects of economic hardship on wellbeing, and if it interacts with cost of living and public assistance to influence the effects of economic hardship on wellbeing outcomes.</li> </ul>

2022 Cohort				
GRANTEE INFORMATION			PROJECT INFORMATION	
BIS Grantee	Project Title	Key Staff	Key Research Questions or Project Goals	Primary Methods
University of California, Berkeley School of Social Welfare	How does Prosocial Identity Protect Juveniles from Reoffending? Testing Core Components of a Conceptual Model for Identity-Based Intervention	Scholar: Luyi Jian  Advisor: Dr. Jennifer Skeem	The project will investigate the following research questions: 1. Compared to identity that is merely conventional (i.e., emphasizes traditional rather than antisocial features), does identity that is other-oriented (i.e., emphasizes kindness, generosity) add value in protecting justice-involved youth against reoffending? 2. Does the protective effect of prosocial identity depend on youths' internalization of a sense of prosocial identity? 3. Does the protective effect of prosocial identity depend on youths' sense of self efficacy (as a proxy for prosocial identity validation)? 4. Does the protective effect of prosocial identity depend on youths' degree of social support and school connectedness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The primary goal of the project is to test hypotheses on prosocial identity content, prominence, and validation in relation to youth's antisocial behavior—specifically, justice involved youth's reoffending behavior.</li><li>This project uses longitudinal data from a study conducted by the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) and UC Berkeley School of Social Welfare on justice-involved youth under community supervision. The study gathers detailed information via survey, assessment, and administrative data on prosocial identity and recidivism amongst justice-involved youth.</li><li>This project analyzes study data using a combination of standard regression analyses and causal modeling.</li></ul>



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