GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISING AND MENTORING STATEMENT**[[1]](#footnote-2)**

Alan Meca, Ph.D.

Department of Psychology, University of Texas at San Antonio

One UTSA Circle, MB 2.416, San Antonio, TX 78249  
[alan.meca@UTSA.edu](mailto:alan.meca@UTSA.edu)

The following statement of advising and mentoring philosophy is meant to serve as a foundation for an advisor/mentor-advisee/mentee working relationship that will be built on mutual respect, transparency, and communication. This statement is not meant to stand as a set of rigid requirements or rules but is meant to augment existing ongoing interactions and informal discussions. Additionally, it critical to acknowledge that there will be individual variability among my students in their backgrounds, aspirations, talents, progress, and accomplishments.

As your designated advisor within the graduate program here at UTSA, in an official capacity, I have the greatest and primary responsibility for helping guide you through the graduate program. However, in addition to acting as your advisor, I consider myself first and foremost your mentor, and you my mentee (although you are encouraged to have other mentors). To sum my role as your mentor and advisor, I will hereby refer to myself as your Mentor. In your role as my advisee and mentee, I will hereby refer to you as padawan (largely because it fits, and I am a geek). A critical goal for me as your mentor is to actively work with you to ***identify*** your career goals and aspirations, ***maximize*** your individual strengths, and ***help*** you develop the necessary skills to succeed in your career.

I am happy to discuss with you any or all of the items in the list below. This is a working document and will be updated through feedback and accumulated experiences.

# Guiding Philosophy and Career Paths

Broadly, my task as a mentor is to help my padawans to be successful in their chosen career. On my end, this involves working with my padawans to develop the necessary skills and track-record for succeeding in their occupational goals. As a result, it is essential for my padawans to work with me early on in identifying a chosen career path and/or a range of career paths in which they are interested in at the earliest possible date. I do however recognize that career paths may change throughout the graduate program. For this reason, I will make every effort to ensure that you are exposed to all aspects of training (i.e., research, teaching, service/advocacy, and clinical work, if appropriate) so that you have the background to pursue different options when the time comes. Exposure to all aspects of training will not only make you more well-rounded, something I have found to be extremely useful within my own career, but will serve to expose you to different career opportunities that may either resonate more with you or solidify/reaffirm existing career goals. However, this approach does necessitate that you do things, at times, that you may not be enthusiastic about doing, even though you may be in the future. Discussions about your career plans will be included as part of the semesterly developmental review process (see ***Appendix A***), but you should feel welcomed to bring up the issue whenever you are compelled to do so (and I will do likewise).

Although most training program are designed to prepare you for an academic career, I am very well aware that not all students will go that route. As your mentor, I am interested in supporting you in whatever career path you choose, whether it is academic or not. I will do my best to help you obtain the experiences and skills needed to succeed in whatever career path you choose.

# TARDIS Core Value

Importance of Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, Justice, and Advocacy. Advancing diversity (i.e., ensuring representation) and advocating for equity (i.e., ensuring access and support), inclusion (i.e., welcoming thoughts, ideas, and perspectives of all individuals) and justice (i.e., addressing systemic barriers and policies that maintain status quo) are not only morale imperatives in their own right, but are critical and essential values within the TARDIS lab. and within the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) at large. Indeed, UTSA, the Department of Psychology, and the TARDIS lab includes individuals from diverse backgrounds with respect to race/ethnicity, SES, gender, sexuality, immigrant generation status, nationality, religion, political ideology and worldview, among other dimensions of diversity. Moreover, given that a central aspect of our research as it pertains to marginalized and disenfranchised populations, continuously reflecting on how privilege and positionality, and how they may influence our perspectives on the research that we do, is a required of us to conduct our research. For a cursory review on these concepts, I encourage students to read Dafina-Lazarus Stewart’s article within Inside Higher Edu (<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2017/03/30/colleges-need-language-shift-not-one-you-think-essay>)

Within the context of the mentor-padawan relationship, as your mentor, I will continuously strive to understand and respect your position and perspectives and how it informs your work. Although I have striven to understand my own privilege as a light-skin U.S.-Born Hispanic cisgender male and any biases I may have, I encourage my padawans to recognize any privileges and biases that I may be unaware of and/or exhibit, and how it informs my research, teaching, and mentoring. Concurrently, I will push you to recognize your own privileges and biases and the role that they play in your own research, teaching, and advocacy. I should note, it is important to view these biases not as character flaws, but as constraints on current thought patterns. By understanding them, and how they impact you, you will have greater capacity to think beyond current cognitive constraints.

Personal Life. I not only expect, but actively encourage my padawans to have a personal life outside the lab, and to take breaks from working when applicable (e.g., during winter break). Even Frodo stopped at Rivendale for a short break on the quest to destroy the one ring - proving that there is always time to take a short break, even when the fate of the world is riding on it. The fact is, people who spend all their time on work activities ***generally*** tend to be less productive over the long term, less creative in their work, and frankly less fun as padawans and colleagues. I speak of this not just based on the science of it, but from personal experience. My creative productivity has typically plummeted during times in my career where I have removed video games or Netflix binging. So, I encourage you not only to establish a personal life, but to take up non-academic hobbies (e.g., playing video games, Netflix binging, running, biking, etc.).

Moreover, padawans with a partner, and especially those with children (furbabies included), may become severely stressed if they do not put enough effort and time into their personal lives. If it helps, I highly recommend creating a *flexible* schedule. For the most part, I work from 9 AM to 5 PM on weekdays and on weekends only do light emails in the early morning. While at times I may deviate from this schedule, depending on deadlines and on other circumstances, this schedule largely allows me to spend time with my family without feeling guilty about not working.

Independence. A central component of my mentoring philosophy is driven by what we know from adolescent development. The development of autonomy and independence is fueled through support and scaffolding (on the part of the parent in adolescence). Building on this, I will strive to create a context that encourages the expression of autonomy while scaffolding the skills necessary for you to work independently. Translating this to day-to-day, although we will have several points of contact during the week, I expect my padawans to work without daily input or guidance from me. My general approach is for you to “figure it out” on your own, a skill in its own right.

At same time, I do encourage you to contact me for support if you feel stuck. I am, as your mentor after all, available for consultation, but you are expected to use your own judgment. At times though, even upon solicitation of assistance, I may point you in the right direction and encourage you to try to figure it out on your own none the less. Contrary to Yoda, who is not very wise at all, he led to the downfall of the Jedi order after all, trying is a vital process to active learning. It now only allows you to overcome any insecurities but provides opportunities for learning experiences. The simple fact of the matter is, failure is inevitable, and that is okay – so long as we learn something from it.

Finally, I expect a certain degree of autonomy and self-initiation. If a padawan needs input from me in order to move forward, it is their responsibility to seek me out or [**schedule a meeting**](https://calendly.com/alan-meca) **(**[**https://calendly.com/alan-meca**](https://calendly.com/alan-meca)) I am happy to initially provide more regular guidance to padawans who are not accustomed to working independently, but by the time they leave the university, I expect them to be able to function as independent researchers, teachers, advocates, and so on – an expectation that any place of employment will have regardless of occupation.

With that being said, if there is a project/research that you are working on in collaboration with the TARDIS lab and myself, I expect that you come to me before approaching individuals outside of the lab. For example, if you find that a certain individual or organization could help further a project, whether it is another faculty member, administrator at UTSA, an external faculty member, or a community leader, I expect you to speak with me before contacting them. Although I encourage independence and autonomy, your actions none the less reflect me and the TARDIS lab by extension. By touching base with me, we will be able to prevent any potential miscommunication or mishaps in advancing projects and the broader TARDIS research agenda.

# Writing and Feedback

Writing will be a critical component of your academic training at UTSA in your courses and under my supervision. The capacity for you to translate your thoughts onto paper, in an organized, intuitive, and fluid way, will be an essential skill regardless of your chosen career. Indeed, as an academic, you will be required to write manuscripts and grants; as an instructor, you will be required to write educational materials and review student papers; and in other professions, you will still be expected to write briefs, reports, pitches, and/or proposals. As such, it is important for you to realize that writing is a skill that serves as an artistic and scientific expression of ones’ thoughts. To paraphrase *Hamilton: An American Musical*, **writing is an iterative act of creation.**

When it comes to writing your thesis and dissertation, manuscripts, and presentations, it is critical to understand that the **goal is not to strive for perfection at the first round**, but to begin the iterative process of writing. As your mentor, I would rather have a rough draft that we can go back and forth in polishing in the early stages, than an incomplete draft in the later stages that nonetheless requires work. On this note, as an iterative process, feedback and recommended changes (often done through Track Changes) should not be taken as criticisms, but as constructive feedback focused on guiding you in the development of your thoughts and writing style. At the same time, feedback and recommended changes are often just that, recommended changes, intended to assist in the flow of the manuscript.

# Conduct

Relationships with Other Padawans. At the inception of the TARDIS Lab, I made two key decisions: 1) the lab would be named TARDIS, because I love Doctor Who, and 2) the T would stand for Team, because research (and life for that matter) is a team effort. As noted above, autonomy and independence are critical for excelling academia, but independence is nurtured through interdependence and collaboration. Indeed, if it is one thing I have learned from my own experiences personally and scholastically, it is that individualism and collectivism need not be antithesis, and can be integrated and fused – that is part of what biculturalism is about!

Consistently, many of my most creative ideas have stemmed from conversations with colleagues or students over lunch or coffee, and my best work occurs through an iterative process with my peers and padawans. As such, I cannot stress how critical it is for my padawans to recognize the role that their peers will have on them and their careers. Indeed, my padawans learn the most from each other as well as other students, both undergraduate and graduate, and/or postdocs. Therefore, I expect my padawans to develop a strong professional relationship with other people in my lab and in the program more generally. This relationship should be supportive, not competitive. Early career students should seek out the advice of late career undergraduate and graduate students and postdocs. In turn, late career students and postdocs should be generous in providing advice. Recognize that your peers may not only one day be critical components of your professional network, but will serve as a microcosm for learning the skills necessary for effective networking.

Providing Constructive Criticisms. Developing the capacity to provide constructive criticisms is a skill that is necessary for any career and occupation. Whether it is giving constructive feedback to students, if you are an instructor, or feedback to employees working under your supervision, it will be necessary to develop this skill and there will be plenty of opportunities to do so within your academic training. Indeed, as a member of the TARDIS Lab, you will often be expected to provide constructive feedback to my own manuscript as well as that of your peers’ manuscript, whether it is a paper they intend to submit for publication, a presentation proposal, or their thesis and dissertation.

Although the capacity for providing constructive feedback will improve with experience and as you develop your expertise (both theoretical and statistical), individuals regardless of their expertise and level can provide constructive feedback. For example, early career students may be able to point out leaps in logic on a manuscript that was not apparent by the author(s) who are more familiar with the underlying theoretical framework. At the end of the day, feedback though should be constructive and come from a position of seeking to “lift your peers up”. As a team, we must be invested in the success of each other, as that contributes to the weight of your degree, training, and will establish a foundation for future success regardless of your intended career goals.

Time Management. This document makes it clear that I expect a lot from my padawans. The less time efficient a person is, the more hours/week it will take to meet those expectations. Therefore, I expect my padawans to learn and to practice good time management. I am happy to discuss organizational strategies for time management including methods for prioritizing tasks and applications that may assist. Below are a few tools I have found particularly effective:

* **Outlook Calendar:** One of the best tools in my arsenal for organizing myself and maintaining effective use of my time is Outlook Calendar. However, this tool is only as effective as you allow it to be. As I noted earlier, I encourage you to create a general work schedule (I attempt to constrain my efforts to M-F 9-5) and block out time for studying and completing course work AND for advancing writing projects each week.
* **ToDoist (https://todoist.com/):** Honestly one of my favorite tools! ToDoist allows for effective task management and assignment. Tasks can be scheduled, prioritized, and organized by type of task (e.g., research, coursework, TA assignment, etc.) and by specific sub-task (e.g., specific paper/project, specific course, etc.).
* **Mendeley (https://www.mendeley.com/):** Over the course of your academic training, you will compile a LARGE database of PDF and research articles. A program like Mendeley works to help organize this literature and allows for annotation. Additionally, Mendeley allows you to move articles into corresponding projects, making it easier to compile your literature reviews. There is also an integrated reference feature, although I honestly shy away from such features as they tend to be overly buggy.
* **Excel Tracking Sheets:** Although this may seem a bit old school, I have found excel sheet to be a useful tool for keeping track of projects/papers in development, under review, and published. I am happy to share my own tracking sheet upon request, particularly as you advance in your career and in the program.

Human subjects. My padawans must abide by all university requirements for working with human subjects. Information about the implementation of these procedures in my lab is available at: <http://research.utsa.edu/research-funding/human-subjects/>. Additional information and guidance may be provided by our lab manager and from me. It is essential for all members of the lab to be respectful of our research subjects and to comply with all of the principles of informed consent.

  Resolving conflicts. Although we are a team, we are still compromised of individual personalities, and conflict at one point or another is inevitable. That being said, conflicts can be greatly minimized through effective communication. Indeed, the goal of this document is to clearly communicate my expectations to reduce the possibility of misunderstandings between myself and my padawans. If you have concerns about your interaction with me and/or with anyone else, please don't hesitate to come talk with me. If your conflict is with me and you do not feel comfortable speaking with me about it and/or you feel uncomfortable speaking with me about a conflict with someone in the lab, program, or department, I encourage you to speak to the Graduate Advisor of Record (GAR; Drs. David Weber [MS Program] and Mary McNaughton-Cassill [Ph.D.]) and/or the Department Chair (Dr. Sandra Morissette). If you wish a conversation to remain anonymous, be sure to indicate that at the start of any conversation, whether with me, the GAR, or the Department Chair. Know that I will strive to always listen attentively, understand your perspective, and work in your best interests.

Ethics.My padawans should familiarize themselves with, and abide by, University of Texas at San Antonio's "Code of Conduct" (<https://catalog.utsa.edu/policies/administrativepoliciesandprocedures/studentcodeofconduct/>), Society for Research in Child Development’s (SRCD) Ethical Principles and Standards for Developmental Scientists (<https://www.srcd.org/about-us/ethical-principles-and-standards-developmental-scientists>), and APA’s Responsible Conduct of Research Guidelines (<https://www.apa.org/research/responsible>).

# Meetings and Consultation

Individual Meetings. I expect my padawans to schedule individual 30-to-60-minute bi-weekly meetings with me and to schedule additional ad-hoc meetings as necessary. Although my preference is to meet face-to-face, as I find these meetings to be far more productive, I understand that circumstances and personal obligations may necessitate remote meetings. As such, I am available to meet via skype, Adobe Connect, or other similar platforms. That being said, although I will strive to work with students and their own specific circumstance and obligations, in the interest of maintain my own work-life balance, standing biweekly meetings **MUST** be scheduled on weekdays and during general work hours (9 AM to 5 PM). With the exception of extraneous circumstances (e.g., family emergency, grant deadline, thesis/dissertation deadline, etc.), ad-hoc meetings should also be scheduled on weekdays and during general work hours.

Lab Meetings & Workshops. I expect my padawans to attend lab meetings that we jointly schedule unless they are traveling or have some other unavoidable conflict. In addition, I expect my padawans to attend, present, and/or lead TARDIS Workshops. TARDIS workshops are developed to a) provide foundational skills to undergraduate and/or graduate students, b) provide a venue for students to present their work, c) learn how to receive constructive feedback on their work, and d) learn how to provide constructive feedback. Scheduling of TARDIS workshops will vary semester to semester, but TARDIS lab will strive to host at least 1 workshop a semester.

  Communication. Iam available by email, face-to-face in my office, or by chat vis-à-vis Microsoft TEAMS. **The phone is NOT a reliable way to reach me.** Additionally, my email response time may be slow because of competing demands on my time. As previously noted, I strive to avoid working after 5 PM and on weekends. If there is a matter of urgency (personal or lab crisis, deadline for a letter, etc,) please let me know immediately and note it within the subject line. Given the way the world currently operates, and as a matter of establishing my own personal work-life balance and work boundaries, I do not provide students my mobile phone number. However, through the Microsoft TEAMS app, you may contact me at any time. When I submit a letter of reference or other document on behalf of my padawans, I will typically notify you by email when the task is completed. With few exceptions, Padawans should request such letters a month in advance and email me a few days prior to a deadline as a reminder.

# Lab Duties and Responsibilities

Your lab duties and responsibilities within the TARDIS Lab will vary as a function of your experience within the graduate program. Although there will be individual differences, below are general road marks for my expectations of your role within the TARDIS Lab:

* **First Semester:** Within the first semester, your duties and responsibilities will be fairly minimal as your primary tasks are to 1) adjust to the graduate program itself, 2) become acquainted with the broader literature relevant to your specific research interests, and 3) familiarize yourself with the various research projects the TARDIS lab has completed, is actively conducting, or will be conducting.
* **Second Semester:** By your second semester, the expectation is that you will contribute broadly to the supervision of at least one data collection project. This will specifically involve you working with me, the lab manager, and one or more research assistants to move the project forward by 1) identifying necessary tasks and ensuring they appropriately assigned by the lab manager, 2) working with the RAs to ensure they are on task and know what to do, and 3) spearheading higher order activities necessary for moving the project forward (e.g., identifying relevant constructs, selecting final measures, reviewing surveys, drafting IRB proposals, etc.). This project may be completed within the course of one or more semesters. Additionally, at this point we will encourage you to begin identifying a topic and semester to contribute to the ongoing TARDIS RA Workshops previously mentioned.
* **Second Year:** By your second year, the expectation is that you will be involved not only in supervising the project associated with your Master’s Thesis/Dissertation, assuming it requires data collection, but also involved in supervising at least one additional data collection projects, and lending hands on other Padawans’ data collection projects, whether they are first-year graduate students beginning to supervise their own project or more senior padawans. Additionally, by the second year the expectation is that you are engaging in “informal mentoring” of various RAs by taking time to talk with them and provide guidance regarding specific lab tasks, applying to doctoral programs, and what doctoral programs are like. This will also extend to assisting RAs to come up with ideas and draft presentations for academic conferences.
* **Third Year and Beyond:** After the third year, the expectation is that padawans will be involved in directly mentoring at least one RA and supervising at least two data collection projects in addition to their own thesis/dissertation. By third year, padawans will also be involved in informally mentoring first-year padawans (i.e., graduate students), providing guidance on the general transition and assistance, when necessary, and in conducting relevant statistical analyses on research presentations and manuscripts. In doing so, you will not only demonstrate good citizenship within the TARDIS lab, but will also expand your vita to provide a more comprehensive research agenda and gain more mentoring skills that will be vital regardless of your career trajectory. That being said, I encourage senior padawans to still consult with me prior to committing to any one project. Depending on your research goals and trajectory, we want to ensure that your involvement in any one particular project fits your general goal and trajectory. Finally, as before, senior padawans will be involved in assisting me in working with RAs to prepare conference presentations.

# Coursework and Research Background

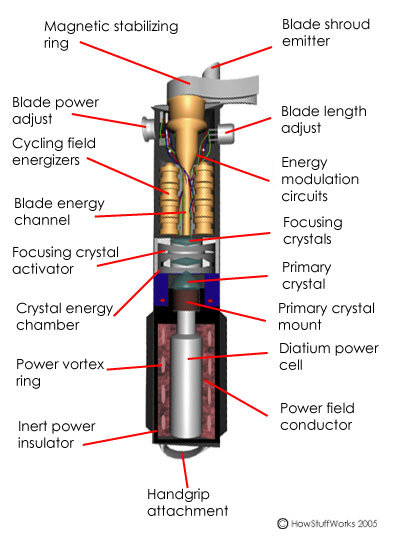
Coursework. As your advisor and mentor, I don't have any standard course requirements beyond those of the psychology graduate program. Instead, I expect my padawans to develop a solid background in the concepts and skills that their research and career path require. This could be accomplished in the form of coursework but also workshops and informal arrangements with other individuals (students, postdocs, faculty or staff). I do, however, expect all students to be well versed in quantitative research designs and recommend that they take as many methods and statistics courses as their schedule allows. Students are also expected to develop excellent proficiency in SPSS for database management and analysis and at least one other program, preferably Mplus (which is what I use). In sum, as it relates to coursework, I provide you the opportunities to forge your own curriculum within the context of the graduate course requirements.

All of that being said, it is important to note that Bs get degrees! That is not to say that I encourage my padawans to strive for mediocrity, but instead, I encourage you to understand that the fundamental learning objective of a doctoral program is the establishment of an independent research expertise/agenda. Towards this end, the most critical thing you need to acquire throughout your graduate training is not a specific body of knowledge, but a general scientific skill set and the capacity to critically think for yourself. Although courses and lectures can be useful towards that end, the best strategies for building these capacities are to 1) become familiar with the relevant literature (often courses will cover topics not related at all to your research interests), 2) have one-on-one interactions with mentors and senior doctoral students who have developed these skills, and 3) conduct research which can include contributing to existing manuscripts, drafting research proposals, outlining a research study, analyzing data, or writing your own manuscript. Suffice to say, courses often get in the way of doing these things, and hence I encourage you to learn how to exert ***just the right*** amount of energy into your coursework to ensure you are in good standing but have the time necessary to be involved in the more important tasks.

Original Literature. Regardless of your career path, a current knowledge of the literature is essential. Indeed, such knowledge will be instrumental in academia, teaching, or in working within the community. Therefore, I expect my padawans to spend significant number of hours each week reading relevant literature that is both specific/directly related to their research interests and of broad relevance to the field. For example, students with interests in personal identity development should not limit their reading to that of Erikson, Marcia, and Neo-Marcia based studies, but should engage with the broad scholarship on identity and personality, learning about identity development within other domains may shed light on phenomena encountered within current literature on personal identity development. Students should begin by reading all of the articles recommended by me during our initial meetings. From there, they should do all of the following to stay up to date of current literature:

1. **Sign up for journal article alerts.** You will receive emails notifying you of new issues and new online articles for the journal. Please talk with me about appropriate journals for which to receive alerts.
2. **Google Scholar alerts.** You can input custom keywords to receive alerts (usually 2-3 times per week) of matching articles from all across the disciplinary spectrum. You can also set alerts for specific researchers who have a Scholar profile. Additionally, you should set up your own Scholar profile upon entry into the graduate program (even if there is not yet anything in it).
3. **Research Gate and Academia.** Journals are fairly slow and as a result, by the time an article is published, new work is already being conducted that address key limitations or extends these findings. ResearchGate and Academia, which function as the Facebook of the academic arena, serve as a good source for articles in press or under review. Additionally, these platforms are great for connecting you to scholars all over the world and keeping you updated on their current research projects.
4. **Blogs, Facebook groups, and Twitter.** Some of the newer developments take place on blogs, Facebook groups, and Twitter. You should follow a reasonable set of these to stay up to date on the most cutting-edge issues in the field. Several of **my research project** ideas have sprung from interactions on **twitter in particular!**

**Developing an Original Idea.** Developing an original research idea is one of the most challenging first-steps within the process of conducting scientific research. Padawans all too often begin the doctoral program wide-eyed and with broad research interests (e.g., adolescent development, health disparities, etc.) and have difficulties identifying a specific niche and/or coming up with a concrete research question. The first step in addressing these common challenges is establishing a strong foundation within the broader scientific literature – hence why my tips on conducting a literature review serve as a precursor to this section! A strong foundation will not only allow you to actively explore areas within your broader research interests, narrowing down to a specific niche, but will also potentially identify future directions within the current literature that have yet to be addressed.

The challenge of developing a concrete research question ***can still be difficult~~y~~*** as Padawans sometimes strive for conducting the *perfect* study. However, science is about progress, not perfection – incremental steps are critical for our advancement of our understanding of the human condition. For this reason, I ***encourage*** my padawans to begin with identifying new/original research ideas within the context of the various existing achieved datasets. In doing so, there is less proclivity to ruminate on whether you are picking the right measure, gathering the best sample, and/or including the right controls. Although limited in what questions can be asked, these datasets often serve as a good starting point for establishing your own research agenda and getting you involved in the process of conducting your own research study. All of that being said, it is critical for you to keep **an open-line of communication with me regarding ideas you generate.** Similar to kyber crystal (or the lens within our eyes for a less geeky example), I can work with you to focus your research question and hone it into something that may result in a product – whether a poster presentation, thesis, or publication.

# Publications and Authorship

Although there will be individual differences in career paths, publishing will serve as an important component for most career paths followed by my padawans. As such, I expect my padawans to work on manuscripts for publication continuously from the beginning of their graduate school career. I am constantly involved in writing several manuscripts at a time, many of which involve colleagues at other universities. Similarly, more advanced graduate students or post docs may be working on manuscripts for publications. As a general approach, I will make an active effort to invite students to work on manuscripts in preparation when they are clearly related to their expressed interests and I have a sense that they can contribute to the paper. In this regard, it is very important that you communicate your interests to me, those that are both ongoing and emerging.

At the same time, early career students should ***make an active effort*** to become involved in manuscripts currently in preparation by senior graduate students, post docs, and/or me that are aligned with their expressed research interests – every decision you make should be focused on advancing you towards your career goals. By becoming involved in these manuscripts, early career graduate students will become exposed to academic writing, develop their writing skills, capacity to provide constructive feedback, and become more knowledgeable regarding TARDIS research.

By the time they graduate, I expect my padawans to have multiple publications in the pipeline (published, in press, in review, in preparation). Ideally, you would have one first-authored paper for each year of your program plus a few additional co-authored papers. This is aspirational, and not often achieved, but doing so would make you competitive for whatever job you are interested in (assuming the papers are high quality, which is expected).

Guidelines for Lead Authorship**[[2]](#footnote-3)**. Resolving authorship arrangements early is essential if we are to maintain positive relationships with our colleagues. I prefer to decide roles and authorship early in the collaboration on the project. This decision can be altered by mutual agreement at a later date if roles have changed. To protect individuals within the TARDIS lab, and consistent with the guidelines identified by APA, TARDIS utilizes the following criteria in order to establish the parameters for taking lead, or first authorship, on any manuscript:

1. Graduate students taking lead on authorship should have ***come up with the original idea for the*** ***manuscript*** (not to be confused with the dataset). However, as outlined below, innovation of the original idea alone does not automatically guarantee first authorship.
2. The lead author ***must play the lead role in the project execution and will take the lead in writing the manuscript and overseeing the revision process.*** In essence, while other members of TARDIS and I may contribute to the manuscript, to differing degrees, a graduate student taking on the role of lead author is responsible for spearheading the manuscript.
3. The lead author ***must propose and follow a timeline to produce a first draft***. To maximize the productivity of TARDIS, and to ensure that project ideas are not monopolized, I expect all graduate students taking lead authorship to establish a timeline to produce a first draft. Should the deadline pass, the issue of authorship on that particular manuscript will be revisited.
4. During the peer-review process, the lead author ***will be responsible for (a) revising the manuscript, (b) assembling the response letter to the action editor/reviewers, and (c) reviewing the page proofs/required copyright forms for the journal.***
5. All lead authors ***will exercise thought and consideration for their fellow TARDIS teammates by not “monopolizing” the TARDIS datasets.*** We cannot put our team in a situation where ONE person is lead author on a fair amount of TARDIS papers. In other words, as a research group, we need to pass the ball and play as a team, it is not in the best interest of our team to have one person always taking the shot, this will only fuel resentment and it will ultimately destroy our team chemistry.

I expect the first author to retain primary responsibility for the publication process even if he or she leaves my lab to take a position elsewhere. The same general procedure applies to authorship for conference presentations as well.

Guidelines for Significant Contribution. In addition to establishing guidelines for lead authorship, it is important that we establish guidelines for co-authorship. Towards this end, it is essential that we define what does (and does not) constitute a meaningful or significant contribution. For example, cosmetic editorial feedback (e.g., grammatical edits and re-wording edits that are stylistic) and minor suggestions that are not incorporated into the final written product does not merit authorship on a paper. In contrast, co-authors on any given manuscript requires that student have made one of the following contributions[[3]](#footnote-4):

1. Make comments or suggestions that address logical gaps in the literature review.
2. Provide critique of the comprehensiveness of the literature review.
3. Assist in expanding the literature review.
4. Provides expertise on the statistical analyses during the paper development/write-up phase.
5. Contribute to the writing of the data analytic section of the paper.
6. Make significant contribution to the tables and figures necessary for conveying the statistical findings.
7. Contribute to the interpretation of the findings.

Professional Meetings. Developing a professional network is essential, regardless of career path. Therefore, I expect all my advisees to attend national and international meetings and to report on their research at those meetings. You should attend one conference per year, pending available funds (there are typically enough department funds available to support this). I am happy to chat with you about how to strategize your conference attendance.

# Thesis and Dissertation

For graduate students, the thesis and/or dissertation is your final project prior to completing your degree at UTSA. Although at times the thesis and the dissertation may be perceived as a discrete and monumental challenge, much like Fluffy in Harry Potter, it is more effective to conceptualize the dissertation as the next stage of your developing program of research. That is, from entry to the program you will be working towards developing coherent research interests (i.e., Master’s Students) and/or a program of research of your own (i.e., Doctoral Students). Much like Harry Potter did not know much of anything upon entering Hogwarts, you are also not expected to know what your specific research interests are, beyond the broad interests that led you to working with me, what your specific area of expertise is, what your coherent program of research is, or what it will look like right from the beginning of the graduate program. Rather, it is an evolving process that takes shape over time. Generally speaking, I expect students to be ***reasonably* *clear*** about their research focus by the end of the first year in the program. This clarity is necessary for the development of a thesis or dissertation.

It should be noted that while the thesis represents a steppingstone towards the advancement of a coherent expertise/program of research, the dissertation is best represented as an accumulation and entry point to becoming an independent scholar. As such, the dissertation itself should be a well-designed innovative (whether theoretically or methodologically) study or set of studies that clearly addresses gaps in the existing literature. The topic of the thesis and the dissertation will be determined by the student, in consultation with me as the mentor.

# Teaching

I have always found that the best way to ensure in-depth learning of any material, particularly statistics and research methodology, is through teaching it to others. More generally, teaching is a tremendous way to learn to communicate complex concepts to a non-specialist audience – an essential skill for anyone in **ANY** occupation. For early-career graduate students, I encourage them to serve as teaching assistants and take an active role in teaching. For late-career graduate students, I encourage you to take opportunities to act as course instructors or section leaders. Furthermore, any career path pursued by my padawans will likely require that they be able to balance multiple diverse responsibilities. Graduate school is a low-risk place to learn to balance such responsibilities.

For students who are interested in academia, and more so for those students interested in pursuing teaching careers, I encourage you to teach and/or TA for multiple courses during your graduate career. This is **more demanding** of your time, but this diversity of experience is excellent training for the heavier and more diverse course loads of faculty. I invite all my padawans to give a guest lecture in one of my courses or to spearhead one of the undergraduate level TARDIS workshops.

# It Takes a Village

Establishing a Community. I think it is important to note, although somewhat obvious, that I, as your mentor, am only human. This not only means that from time to time I may make mistakes (see below), but it also means that my expertise and knowledge has limitations. For this reason, I want to emphasize the importance that you develop a professional network beyond me. A professional network should begin with, first and foremost, with your peers within the TARDIS lab and across labs and programs. I will of course encourage you to network beyond your peers, but sometimes mentors will overlook the critical role peers may have in your future careers. Not only do peers serve as a much-needed form of social support, but as your trajectories blossom, peers may become future collaborators, colleagues, reviewers, editors, and even employers. As such, ensure you are spending time to get to know students within the graduate program.

Beyond your peers, I encourage you to identify additional advisors and mentors that fit your own specific areas and compliment my own mentoring. Although I think I am pretty good at statistical analysis, there are other faculty at UTSA and elsewhere who are way more knowledgeable than me (e.g., Brian Armenta and Willie Hale). Whereas I consider myself well versed in social psychology and social identity theory, I was trained first and foremost as a Neo-Eriksonian and as such there are colleagues with a stronger social identity background (e.g., Brian Armenta, Willie Hale, David Pillow). Although my research focuses on marginalized populations, there are also other colleagues whose research paradigm are rooted in advocacy of equity, inclusion, and justice (e.g., Shelby Scott). Finally, there are other faculty who take on a developmental orientation that are either rooted earlier in the lifespan (e.g., Monica Lawson) or compliment or own developmental work (e.g., Brian Armenta, Denver Brown). To put it succinctly, I encourage you to establish a community of peers, colleagues, advisors, and mentors that extend beyond me and my own academic network.

Working in Other Labs. At the heart of my mentoring style, is the acknowledgment that student training should be individually tailored to fit the needs of the student. To expand on your expertise and knowledge, that may require you to work with other faculty members at UTSA or elsewhere. Working in other labs may help you diversify your research experience, exposes you to different mentoring styles and lab operations, and allows you to build relationships with other faculty who might serve on your committees and write you letters of recommendation. Other faculty sometimes will have assistantships available that they may advertise, but generally the best way to get involved in another lab is to contact the PI directly to express your interest. That being said, prior to reaching out to other faculty, I encourage you to touch base with me to discuss how such work may assist in your own professional development and how to best balance your time commitment. Moreover, it should be noted that if you are funded to work on a specific project (by me or someone else) that work must be your top priority.

Switching Advisors. Although we adopt a one-on-one mentorship model and students are slotted to work with a specific faculty member, it is also the case that students are admitted to the department as a whole. This means, changing advisors is permitted for personal or professional reasons. However, such a change must be mutually agreeable to all parties: student, original advisor, new advisor, and GAR. Ideally, a change would occur relatively early in a student’s graduate career (first or second year), but this need not be the case. Additionally, students have the option of adding a secondary advisor at any point. Doing this could make a lot of sense if a student’s interests wind up aligning with another faculty member’s expertise, but the student does not wish to make a full change of advisors.

# We Are Only Human

As noted before, although I am your mentor/advisor, I am also only human. While I will attempt to hold myself to the highest standards possible, to err is human nature and there go inevitable. As mere humans, mentors and advisors are not infallible or all-knowing (although some may pretend to be). At one point or another I may not know something, may forget something, may make an inaccurate statement, or simply put, I may blunder. Although I will always strive to do my best to actively work with you to ***identify*** your career goals and aspirations, ***maximize*** your individual strengths, and ***help*** you develop the necessary skills to succeed in your career, there may come a time where the strength and knowledge of your mentor may falter. For this reason, it is important that you hold me accountable in order to ensure that you are benefiting from what should be a mutually beneficial relationship. If at any point you feel I am not meeting your expectations, it is important to communicate that with me so that we can evaluate how we may reach a point of mutual benefit. As noted above, to fail is a part of the human experience but serves as a critical learning experience (and potentially for augmentation of this very statement).

With that being said, welcome to UTSA, to the Department of Psychology, and to the TARDIS Lab. May the force be in our favor and may we both strive to collaboratively work on our mutual success!

**Appendix**

**Appendix A – Semesterly Developmental Review Process (Example)**

At the end of each semester, Dr. Meca will compile a Developmental Review that is meant to serve as a recap of a student’s accomplishments and progress in the program as well as identify goals and next steps for the subsequent semester. It should be noted that this process is meant to be a transactional and iterative process between the mentor and the padawan. Moreover, it should be noted that these reviews are highly tailored and individualized to the specific student. Below is an example, with permission from the student, of such a review:

**Recap and Review of Current Progress – Kelsie Allison (1st Year, End of Spring)**

1. **Course Work**
   1. Fall 2020 Semester Course Selection
      1. Psychometric theory
      2. Research credits
      3. Qualitative methods
2. **Professional Summary**
   1. Manuscripts
      1. Accepted: 0
      2. Revise & Resubmit: 0
      3. Under Review: 0
      4. In Preparation: 3
         * In Prep – USIS Measurement Invariance (3nd)
         * In Prep – Identity and Emerging Adulthood Chapter (TBA)
         * In Prep – Cultural Family Values (TBA)
   2. Presentations
      1. Posters
         * First: 1
         * Second: 2
         * Third: 0
         * Fourth or More: 0
      2. Oral
         * First: 0
         * Second: 0
         * Third: 0
         * Fourth or More: 0
   3. Awards & Grants: 0
3. **Spring Summary**
   1. Manuscripts
      1. Accepted: 0
      2. Revise & Resubmit: 0
      3. Under Review: 0
      4. In preparation: 5
         * In Prep - Athletic Identity and Alcohol Use (CARDS)
         * In Prep – USIS Measurement Invariance (3nd)
         * In Prep – Identity and Emerging Adulthood Chapter (TBA)
         * In Prep – Cultural Family Values (TBA)
         * In Prep - Negative Identity (MUSIC)
   2. Presentations (3, 1 First)
      1. **Allison, K.,** Brown, I., Sharma, S., Webb, T., Higgins, J., Taylor, D., Rodil, J., & Meca, A. (2020). Cultural identity orientations among Latinx emerging adults. Poster to be presented at the 2020 Special Topic Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD): Construction of the ‘Other,’ Rio Grande, Puerto Rico.
      2. Cowan, I., **Allison, K.,** Carr, K., Rios Rodgiruez, V. L., Webb, T., & Meca, A. (2020). Comparison of Hispanic College and Noncollege Emerging Adults. Poster to be presented at the 2020 Special Topic Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD): Construction of the ‘Other,’ Rio Grande, Puerto Rico.
      3. Rodil, J., **Allison, K.,** Sharma, S., Meca, A., & Gonzales-Backen, M. (2020). Measurement invariance testing for the United States Identity Scale (USIS) across Black, White, and Other college students. Poster to be presented at the 2020 Special Topic Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD): Construction of the ‘Other,’ Rio Grande, Puerto Rico.
   3. Awards
      1. Received: 0
      2. Rejected: 0
   4. Career Development
      1. Skills Learned
         * Working with Non-Profits
         * Developing Surveys & Assessments
      2. Professional Exposure
         * Manuscript Writing
         * Conference Proposal
         * Program Evaluation

**Moving Forward**

1. **Active Data Project**
   1. Lead Project
      1. Data Collection: First-Gen Mentoring program Evaluation
         * Role: Graduate Student PI
         * Priority: Unknown
         * Tasks:
           1. Follow up with Marissa
         * Research Assistants Assigned
           1. Check with Taylor
   2. Collaborative Projects
      1. Data Collection: College Athletes and Positive Identity Development (CAPID)
         * Role: Co-I
         * Priority: Unknown
         * Tasks:
           1. Follow up with Athletic Directors
         * Research Assistants Assigned
           1. Check with Taylor
      2. Validation of Inventories on Parenting and Parenthood (VIPP)
         * Role: Co-I
         * Priority: Moderate
         * Tasks: TBD
         * Research Assistants Assigned
           1. Check with Taylor
         * Needs more participants
2. **Future Data Projects**
   1. MUSIC 2.0
      1. Role: Co-I
      2. Priority: Moderate
      3. Tasks: TBA
      4. Research Assistants Assigned
         * Check with Taylor
      5. Hope to start identifying measures to include and faculty to include
   2. Comparing FGCS and non-FGCS
      1. Role: Lead
      2. Priority: moderate
      3. Tasks: create list of constructs to include
3. **Future Papers**
   1. **Manuscripts in Prep (Write Up)**
      1. Athletic Identity and Alcohol Use (CARDS)
         * Role: 2nd Author
         * Priority: High
         * Tasks
           1. Finalize literature review
           2. Revised hypothesis
      2. Cultural Identity Orientations: A Latent Profile Analysis
         * Role: 1st Author
         * Priority: moderate
         * Tasks
           1. Address existing comments.
      3. Cross-Cultural Identity Validation (Venezuela) - *Meca*
         * Summary
           1. This paper will validate a measure of national and ethnic/racial identity among Venezuelans who have relocated to Colombia and the US.
         * Role: TBD
         * Priority: low
         * Tasks
           1. Wait for Dr. Meca
   2. **Manuscripts in Prep (Pending Others)**
      1. Cultural Family Values (Book Chapter)
         * Role: Coauthor
         * Priority: High
         * Tasks: TBD
      2. Identity and Emerging Adulthood (Book Chapter)
         * Role: Coauthor
         * Priority: Moderate
         * Tasks: TBD
      3. Negative Identity (MUSIC)
         * Role: Coauthor
         * Priority: Low
         * Tasks: TBD
4. **Goals for Summer 2020**
   1. Identify New Projects
      1. Identify New Data Collection.
      2. Identify Manuscripts to Focus on.
   2. Thesis Proposal
      1. Discussion on data collection in COVID-19 World.
   3. Career Development
      1. Skills to further development
         * Qualtrics Survey Creation
           1. New Project? 🡪 potentially related to dissertation topic?
         * Statistical Analysis
           1. Workshop
           2. Running own analysis
         * Presentation Skills
           1. Teaching: Guest Lecture?
           2. Presentation: Present at ODU Student Success Conference
      2. New Skills to Development
         * SPSS Syntax Write Up
      3. Professional Exposure
         * Manuscript Writing
           1. Will be developed as you spearhead your own manuscripts.
         * Grant Writing
           1. Need to identify opportunities to assist in grant writing
5. **Notes**

1. Note: This statement was adapted from a statement of adviser philosophy initially developed by Scott Lanyon and then adapted by Gordon Legge, Moin Syed, and now myself. Scott, Gordon, Moin, and I have invited faculty to edit and use their text in their own statements of adviser philosophy. Anyone is free to borrow from this document as they wish, so long as they provide similar attribution to me, Moin, Scott, and Gordon. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Guidelines regarding lead authorship are modified versions of the guidelines established by the ASURT Team (Zamboanga et al., in prep.) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The follow represents a “tentative” list of what qualifies as a significant contribution. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)