

Samuel Rodriguez

Grad 496A

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### Personal Statement

I will be the first person in my immediate family to earn an undergraduate degree and will also be the first to pursue a graduate degree. My parents focused on work their entire lives and pushed my siblings and I to pursue something greater than they did. There is no doubt that my strive for success has been influenced by my harsh economic status, however in my journey to pursue something greater than myself I fell in love with academia. Since as far back as I can remember, I've been an observant person. From remembering the specific environments and events of my life before the age of 3, to picking up on subtle pieces of information in the day to day, I find myself constantly putting together maps of understanding of the things around me. With my natural proclivity towards analysis as a crucial aspect of my identity, I decided after high school that a clinical field would be the best option for me. I eventually decided that clinical or counseling psychology was the best option for me. Working with others to help them reach their potential, in any realm of life, is something I believe aids others in their holistic health. As someone who has personally struggled with strong mental blocks throughout my life, I understand what it feels like to be confused, or in need of help. Through the entirety of life, I have always had to climb some barrier, ordinarily alone. It was never easy for any of my siblings or family members to understand how I viewed the world, but my experience has demonstrated to me that with the right mindset, any goal can be achieved.

During the summer between my sophomore and junior year, I encountered a potential research opportunity under the guidance of Dr. Karl Krupp, and Dr. Purnima Madhivanan. I accepted the offer to work as a research project coordinator under these two professors and would spend the next two years learning how to operate as a researcher. I spent time working with Dr. Krupp on the IRB process, aiding him with revisions and submissions. I also spent a good amount of time translating manuscripts from English, to Spanish, as I would be interacting with the Hispanic community in Tucson, Arizona for much of the project. Being a Hispanic student myself, I was prepared to take on the challenging task of communicating in two different

languages with subjects. Once the project was finally approved by our IRB, I was responsible for outreach and data collection. I put together a data collection team and began to reach out to different community centers, stores, and event organizers. Over the course of the last 1.5 years, our team was able to gather over 500 completed surveys for our research study. During this time, I learned to deal with project finances, outreach, and data collection. The data we collected was concerning held perceptions of the Hispanic population about the pandemic, COVID-19, and the vaccine. We are now currently writing our papers and will soon submit the manuscripts to different journals. I was the recipient of the Western Region Public Health training center stipend because of my research. This research project prepared me for what would come next. I participated in the UROC/AWARDSS research training program, which is designed to mentor underrepresented students in research. I asked Dr. Purnima Madhivanan to be my AWARDSS mentor, and from there the two of us started a new research project from scratch. I was responsible for the literature review, IRB process, and instrument creation on my own. My project is currently in the final stages of the IRB process, and I have already gathered all my instruments and literature to run a new survey-based study for first generation Hispanic students. This survey will be asking about the relationship between academic self-efficacy, stress, and academic outcomes. Once the data is collected, I will run several ANOVA tests to better understand the correlations between the aforementioned items. I also spent one semester in a brain scan lab here at the UofA. Our goal was to understand different psychophysiological phenomenon and how it related to the construction of teams in high stress environments. I learned how to work EKG's, eye trackers, and EEG's. All this research has introduced me to the joy of psychological, and public health research. This information will be used by clinicians, counselors, and other public health experts to better aid underrepresented groups in academia, and in my own community.

My primary research interests are diverse in content, as my main goal is aiding those around me on a personal level. I am interested in doing community work, focusing on different psychological phenomena that occur in my own, and other minority communities. I hope that in the future, my research has a strong positive affect on the field of psychology, and how professionals approach psychopathology and counseling among racially diverse groups. Clinical research has also been at the forefront of my interests, as I care to better understand the way in which physicians interact with their patients, and how it relates to their health conditions. As

previously mentioned, I have worked in a lab dealing with psychophysiological measures and intend to pursue this kind of research in the future. I am interested in the way information affects decision-making in the brain, and the rate at which the mind comes to conclusions given said information. I am equally as interested and open to any kind of research that deals with behavior, neuroscience, and culture, and how all these things relate to working with patients. I intend on keeping a wide variety of research interests within the field of psychology, in order truly find my niche as a future clinical/counseling psychologist.

The counseling psychology PhD program at Indiana University Bloomington caught my eye after I met Dr. Joel Wong at the 2022 APA convention. I was there to speak on a panel presentation given by the AWARDSS PI, Dr. Michelle Perfect. I witnessed Dr. Wong's presentation on masculinities, and how it relates to men in society. What caught my eye the most was Dr. Wong's model for masculinity. Compiling literature, and a scientific approach for his model, it was apparent to me that the model was designed for new research to be produced. Dr. Wong specifically mentioned how he had left out the "content" of masculinity but left future researchers and clinicians with a model to base their observations off. The counseling psychology PhD program also promises to be a research-intensive program, filled with different research project opportunities. Because this program has a strong emphasis on multi-cultural research, it is my top choice, and it would be a pleasure to work with Dr. Joel Wong as my advisor and mentor. A research question I would like to explore under Dr. Wong is related to the idea of masculinity in Hispanic households, and how it relates to the upbringing and psychology of children, and marital spouses. I am also interested in studying counselor-patient relationships among lower income minority clients and understand the differences in interaction as compared to predominantly white experiences.

Upon completion of my PhD at Indiana University, I would pursue a career as a tenure-track professor at a research university. I would like to work at a university hospital, or in a medical/clinical training program teaching students how to do clinical/community-based research. I plan on taking on my own graduate students at some point in the future and focusing on having my own lab in which I continue to conduct meaningful research. At some point in the future, later in my career, I plan to start my own private practice and participate in community outreach. I believe that it is of utmost importance to provide a foundation for a future in

academia that is diverse, and open to new ways of thinking. I also plan on supporting programs like the UROC/AWARDSS program, which opened doors for me I never knew existed. Programs like these are essential in fostering the skills needed to apply to graduate school and help promote students who otherwise would go unnoticed. Being a mentor in one of these programs is also a way to give back, in remembrance of the support I once had as well.

3/5 points	All text is well written and error free.
5/5 points	The writing of all paragraphs focuses on a concise presentation.
5/5 points	The statement follows the five-paragraph format that is the focus and directive of the assignment.
10/10 points	The statement reveals evidence of the student's reflection on and understanding of their fit and match with the particular graduate program presented.

**Total: 23/25**

**Notes:** Nice work! You are in a good place with this personal statement. There are a few spots where you should be more specific. Please review comma usage: When you have two nouns or incomplete phrases joined by a conjunction, you do not need a comma. You only need a comma with three or more nouns or phrases. Overall, this does a good job of highlighting your copious research experience and your reasoning for wanting to go to grad school