

SAGE Lab · UQAR

Lab Manual

Research, learning, and working together

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Visit the online manual

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Lab Philosophy

Read online

At the SAGE Lab, we aim to do careful, useful science without losing sight of the people doing it. This page describes how we balance rigor with personal sustainability: taking the time to produce trustworthy work, investing in the skills that make it possible, developing efficient habits, protecting time for deep work, and building a sustainable writing practice.

Measure twice, cut once

The saying “measure twice, cut once” comes from woodworking: before cutting a piece of wood, measure it carefully, because a rushed or inaccurate cut can waste the material and cannot be undone. The same principle applies to research. Before committing time, participants, funding, or a public claim, we should pause long enough to check whether the design, data, analysis, and interpretation are sound.

In modern academic environments, there is a pervasive push to move quickly and produce continuously. The appeal of anti-perfectionism is understandable: it is a legitimate reaction to a system that can demand output at the expense of personal balance, mental health, and thoughtful work.

The approach we prioritize to resist that system without burning out is twofold: accepting that our approach may take more time, while also trying to shorten that timeline by developing more efficient habits. We focus on the work that matters and resist the pressure to hurry when doing so would weaken the science. This is in the interest of better research and the greater good, while preserving the balance that makes sustained work possible.

The Pareto principle is often interpreted to mean that the first 80% of a project may take 20% of the effort and therefore seem worthwhile, while the final 20% may take an additional 80% and therefore be discouraged. In empirical science, that final effort can be where careful checks reveal important problems.

However, the cost of rushing is not trivial. The replication crisis in psychology and the social sciences shows how errors can do more than produce a misleading result in one paper: they can send subsequent work down an unfruitful path and waste years of attention and resources.

Taking time to quality-check our work may slow publication, but it gives us greater confidence in what we publish. At the SAGE Lab, we aim for robust methods, statistics, and interpretations: work that is carefully designed, transparently analyzed, and proportionate to the evidence. Measure twice, cut once: the time spent checking our work is part of the work itself.

Self-compassion and excellence

We strive for **self-compassion and excellence**, and for **warmth and competence** in how we work together. We aim for the highest scientific standards we can sustain while protecting each person’s well-being. This means choosing a realistic scope, doing careful work and adjusting commitments when circumstances change. Excellence concerns the quality of our reasoning and our work; a person’s worth does not depend on their productivity, grades or publications.

Members should be able to ask questions, acknowledge uncertainty, report mistakes and disagree respectfully. Feedback should be specific and useful. We support one another through difficult revisions, take rest seriously and raise workload concerns early. Asking for help is compatible with autonomy, and protecting well-being is part of responsible research.

The image below illustrates Amy Edmondson’s framework connecting psychological safety with performance standards. Our aim is the **learning zone**: people can speak openly while working toward demanding, clear goals. Psychological safety concerns the freedom to take interpersonal risks; self-compassion also concerns how we treat ourselves. Both belong in our approach to sustainable excellence. The diagram is a framework for discussion, not a measurement of our lab.

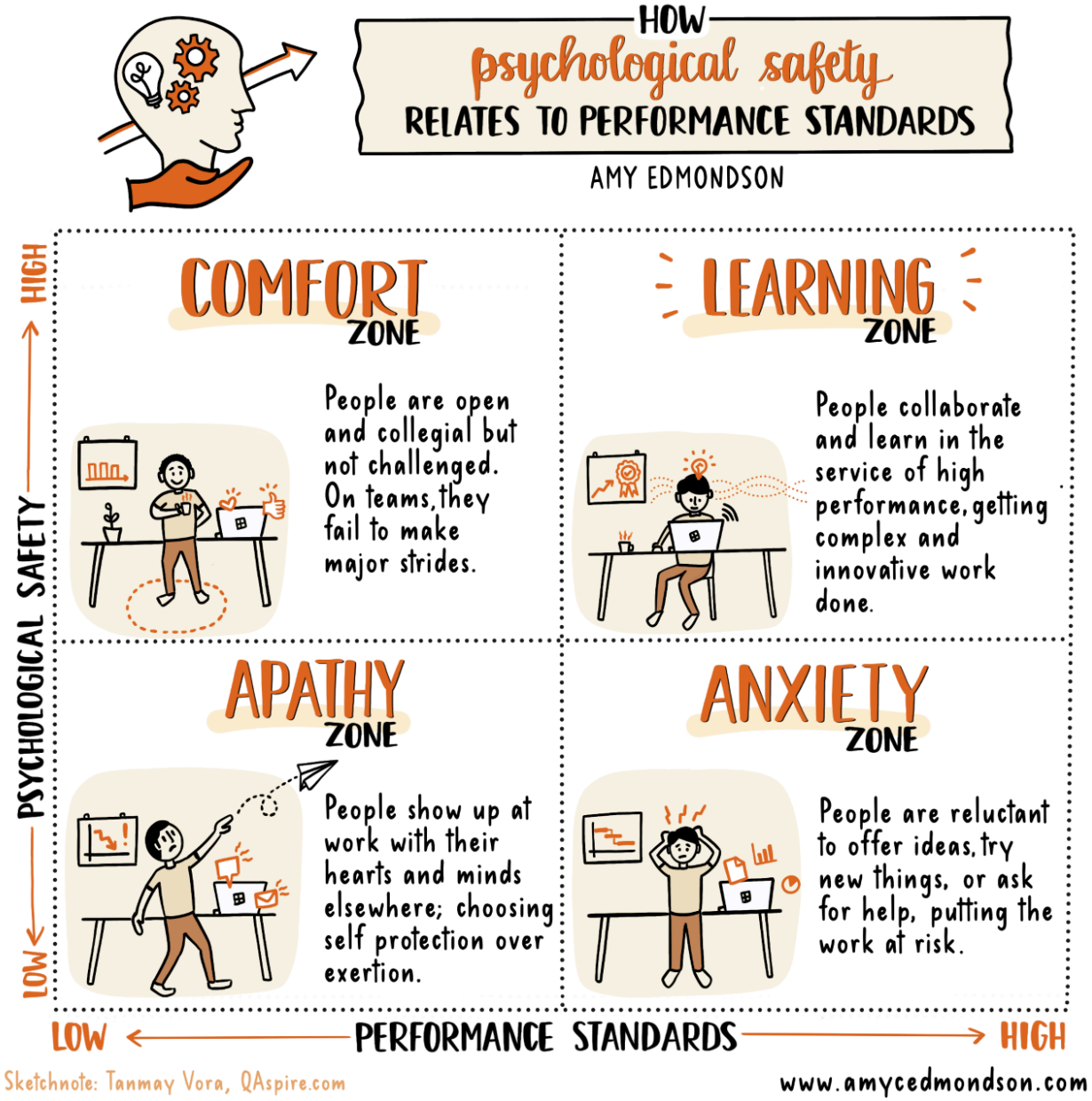


Illustration by Tanmay Vora, QAspire, based on Amy Edmondson's framework. Edmondson explains psychological safety and demanding goals in this Harvard Business School interview.

These commitments apply to the PI as well as to students: clear expectations, appropriate guidance, respectful feedback and realistic workloads are responsibilities we share. They support the persistence that good science needs without making overwork a condition of belonging.

Supporting autonomy, competence and relatedness

Self-determination theory identifies three basic psychological needs. We use them as practical guides for our learning and research environment:

- **Autonomy:** having a voice in goals and methods, understanding the reasons for requirements, and finding personal meaning in the work. Autonomy means acting with a sense of willingness; it does not require working alone or without guidance.

- **Competence:** developing a sense of effectiveness through appropriately challenging tasks, clear expectations, useful feedback and access to training. We support progress rather than expecting everyone to arrive fully trained.
- **Relatedness:** feeling accepted, respected and connected to others. We make room for mutual help and participation without making belonging conditional on productivity.

Supporting these needs is a shared responsibility, including how the PI organizes supervision. Clear structure and demanding scientific standards can coexist with meaningful choice, learning support and warm relationships.

AI and scientific judgment

We use AI to raise scientific standards, reinvesting time saved in verification, learning, and refinement. Our AI policy and resources explain how we apply this principle while protecting confidentiality and taking responsibility for the results.

Sharpen the saw

Doing high-quality science requires more than enthusiasm; it requires a mastery of fundamental tools and methods. As Stephen Covey emphasized in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, 1989), we must take time to "sharpen the saw"—developing core capabilities that make our primary work more effective and reliable.

> *"If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend six hours sharpening my axe."* —
> Attributed to Abraham Lincoln

Investing early in foundational skills requires effort, but it pays off throughout a research career. These skills make difficult work more manageable and leave more room for careful thinking.

We encourage all lab members and prospective collaborators to actively develop these foundational capabilities. Explore our guide on skills for research at the SAGE Lab to see the specific technical and methodological areas we prioritize.

This is our long-term perspective: build lasting competence rather than continually chase the next quick output.

Develop efficient habits

Upholding high standards of excellence and integrity requires cultivating the habits and mindset of a highly effective person. Just as we sharpen our technical tools, we must continually refine our personal systems for managing time, energy, and attention.

High performance in science is not about working until burnout; it is about deliberate self-management, continuous optimization, and personal development. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is essential for sustaining exceptional long-term performance.

We encourage lab members to look for ways to constantly improve their personal effectiveness. The following books have been particularly influential in shaping our approach to personal management and productivity:

- **High Performance Habits: How Extraordinary People Become That Way** (Burchard, 2017). Focuses on deliberate habits—such as generating energy, raising necessity, and demonstrating courage—that sustain long-term success without compromising well-being.
- **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People** (Covey, 1989). A classic framework for personal integrity, proactivity, prioritizing what matters most, and seeking mutual benefit in collaborative work.
- **Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity** (Allen, 2001). A practical workflow system for capturing tasks, clarifying commitments, and organizing actions to maintain a clear mind and reduce cognitive overload.
- **Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength** (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011). Examines the science of self-control, ego depletion, and how to structure environments and routines to preserve mental energy for what truly matters.

Deep work and slow productivity: Cal Newport's influence

Our lab mentality is strongly influenced by the writings of Cal Newport, whose work advocates for depth, focus, and sustainable achievement in a world dominated by distraction and superficial busyness.

Modern academic life can easily degrade into reactive communication—checking emails, responding to messaging channels, and attending fragmented meetings—at the expense of sustained intellectual focus. We actively resist this trend by adopting principles from Newport's key works:

- **Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World** (Newport, 2016). Scientific discovery and rigorous scholarship require long periods of uninterrupted, focused concentration. We protect blocks of time for deep thinking, reading, writing, and complex data analysis.
- **Slow Productivity: The Lost Art of Accomplishment Without Burnout** (Newport, 2024). We embrace a pace of work that prioritizes doing fewer things, working at a natural intensity, and obsessing over quality. Meaningful scientific contributions are built slowly and deliberately over time.
- **A World Without Email: Reimagining Work in an Age of Communication Overload** (Newport, 2021). We aim to structure lab communication intentionally, reducing hyperactive hive-mind messaging so members can spend more time thinking and less time managing inboxes.

- **So Good They Can’t Ignore You: Why Skills Trump Passion in the Quest for Work You Love** (Newport, 2012). We adopt a “craftsman mindset,” focusing on acquiring rare and valuable skills through deliberate practice rather than waiting for motivation or passion to strike.

Writing and navigating academia

Writing is not merely a vehicle for reporting finished research; it is the primary medium through which scientific ideas are clarified, structured, and evaluated. Developing a regular, sustainable writing habit is essential for academic success and scientific communication.

To navigate academic writing and career growth with clarity and purpose, we recommend the following guides:

- **How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing** (Silvia, 2007). A concise, practical guide to overcoming writing blocks by establishing regular, non-negotiable writing schedules and treating writing as a routine habit rather than an emotional event.
- **The Compleat Academic: A Career Guide** (Zanna & Darley, 2004). A comprehensive resource for navigating the academic profession, offering practical advice on grant writing, publishing, teaching, research ethics, and career development.

By combining rigorous quality controls, deliberate skill building, efficient personal habits, deep focus, and sustainable writing practices, we aim to build a research environment where both science and researchers thrive.

Explore current research projects or read about skills for research at the SAGE Lab. New research assistants can follow the onboarding reading checklist.

Supervision capacity

Read online

Welcoming interest while making realistic commitments

Interest in the lab is welcome. It is encouraging to meet people who want to understand research, develop skills, and contribute to questions that matter to them. At the same time, I cannot turn every expression of interest into a research placement. I want the opportunities I offer to come with the time and support they deserve.

Why research capacity matters

The research model has changed substantially over the past decades. Earlier behavioural research could sometimes be conducted with very small samples, little or no compensation for participants, limited checks on statistical power, and flexible analyses that made it easier to mistake noise for a meaningful trend. We now understand the limitations of that model more clearly, and we do not want to reproduce them.

Then	Today
Studies might rely on samples of 10–30 people and still make broad claims.	We use power analysis to plan studies large enough to detect plausible effects and distinguish signal from noise.
Participant time was often treated as freely available.	Ethical, inclusive research requires resources to compensate participants fairly, which makes funding a central constraint.
Flexible analyses and selective reporting could produce apparently positive findings.	We aim to preregister hypotheses and analyses where appropriate, report results transparently, and resist p-hacking.
A publication in a good journal could be treated as the endpoint.	We prioritize careful, reproducible work that can withstand scrutiny and contribute to strong journals without overstating what the evidence shows.

This is why a serious project may take longer and require more funding than it once did. Capacity is not only a question of how many people can join the lab; it is also the time, participant access, supervision, analysis, and financial support needed to do research responsibly.

In practical terms, I am often the bottleneck. The most consequential decisions still require my judgment: shaping a study, checking an analysis, interpreting uncertainty, and deciding what the evidence can support. Higher standards and new constraints make that responsibility more demanding,

so the number of people I can supervise responsibly is limited. This is a constraint on my capacity, not a judgment of anyone's potential.

Much of our research involves statistics, programming, and careful scientific judgment. AI can help produce early drafts, code, and other materials. In our workflow, producing a plausible result is often faster than establishing whether it is valid. We still need to check assumptions, examine the evidence, test analyses, and decide what conclusions are justified. A polished output does not remove that responsibility.

This also shapes what it takes to bring someone into a project. A task that appears short can require substantial preparation, training, feedback, and review. Supervision includes helping someone understand why a method is appropriate, recognize uncertainty, and learn from mistakes. Those are valuable parts of education, and they require time even when an initial task is completed quickly. Adding people does not automatically increase the lab's research capacity.

I distinguish between research support that helps an existing project move forward and an educational investment that primarily supports someone's learning. Both can be worthwhile. A learning opportunity does not have to pay for itself in publications or labour savings. It does, however, need an honest allocation of supervision time and shared expectations about what is possible.

Before offering a research role, we therefore need a real, appropriately scoped task, a suitable supervising contact, and enough capacity to provide feedback and evaluate the work responsibly. Where those conditions are missing, creating a task simply to welcome someone can lead to frustration and promises we cannot keep. Limited capacity is a constraint on what I can offer, not a judgment of someone's potential.

The proposed SAGE Community offers another way to connect: discussion, peer learning, and a sense of belonging without an implied research placement. It is valuable in its own right. Projects may sometimes emerge from these connections, but they require their own agreement and supervision arrangements. Joining is not an audition, and it does not replace a clear answer to an existing research application.

My aim is to be warm about people's interest and precise about commitments, so that community participation and research opportunities can each be worthwhile on the terms actually offered.

— Prof. Rémi Thériault

Explore ways to join the SAGE Lab.

Preparing a project proposal? Our student project decision tree connects project goals, data and resources with the final capacity discussion.

Looking beyond one lab? Read about accessing research experience: the shared capacity challenge, remote opportunities and collective options to explore.

SAGE Community

Read online

The SAGE Lab's open meetings are now open to everyone! Join us **Fridays, 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., in room U-1170 at UQAR in Rimouski**. Anyone interested in psychology, philosophy, science, and thoughtful conversation is welcome, including people beyond the UQAR student community.

See the **official meeting schedule** for upcoming topics and activities.

The aim is to connect like-minded people, learn from one another, and help ideas and information circulate. Social connection and peer learning are worthwhile outcomes in themselves. No research experience is required, and you can attend selectively, listen, or contribute without taking on a research role.

The community is also meant to be a mutual-help space where students and collaborators can support one another, share opportunities and skills, and create situations in which everyone benefits. This matters especially when formal lab capacity is limited: people can still build relationships, learn, contribute, and help one another move forward without waiting for a supervised research placement. I believe that simply belonging to a thoughtful, supportive group like this can be immensely helpful for personal and career development.

What could we bring to a meeting?

The program will reflect members' interests. These are possibilities, not assignments; new topics and formats are welcome.

Contribution	What it could look like
Book club	Introduce a book or short excerpt and discuss the questions it raises.
Scientific paper discussion	Explain a paper's question, methods, findings, and limitations; compare interpretations together.
Research idea or brainstorming	Bring an early question, sketch a study, or explore a possible project with peers.
Previous or ongoing research	Present a course project, poster, thesis, or other work you are allowed to share.
Peer feedback	Request constructive comments on a draft paper, presentation, proposal, or other work, and offer feedback to others.

Contribution	What it could look like
Graduate applications	Discuss a PhD or other graduate application, research statement, or proposed project; exchange peer feedback and experience.
Workshop or skill sharing	Propose a short activity on a method, tool, writing practice, or another topic members want to explore.
Opportunities and announcements	Share funding calls, scholarships, conferences, jobs, research opportunities, and useful resources, including their source and deadline.
Open conversation or guest talk	Suggest a psychology, philosophy, science, or related topic, or propose a speaker.
Hosting and coordination	Lead a session, welcome newcomers, help maintain the schedule, or coordinate an activity with other volunteers.

Members are encouraged to take initiative and propose activities, workshops, and discussions. Leadership can be shared or rotated, with a clear, manageable commitment. Presenting or organizing is voluntary; listening and asking questions are equally welcome ways to participate.

Share only material you have permission to share. Peer feedback is informal and does not replace scientific supervision, official application advice, or approval to begin a lab project.

Open meetings, shaped by participants

These open lab meetings are for discussion, connection, and peer learning. They are distinct from the lab's research working meetings, which focus on active projects and may involve confidential material.

Participants can suggest articles or topics and vote on what to read or discuss the following week. A simple show of hands or short poll is enough: coordinators can offer two or three suggestions, confirm a willing host, and circulate the selected reading ahead of time. Reading is encouraged, but newcomers can still join the conversation.

Coordinators can also help the community grow organically during the semester by preparing campus posters and sharing announcements through appropriate student and campus channels. Publicity should point to confirmed meeting details and make clear that everyone is welcome; organizing and promotion are voluntary contributions.

Prof. Thériault plans to participate and may offer occasional talks or advice. Participants will organize the gatherings so they can continue when he is absent. The group is a place for exchange, rather than a standing individual supervision appointment.

Stay connected

To join the **SAGE Community announcement list**, email labosage@uqar.ca and ask to be added. You will receive meeting topics, practical details, activities, and relevant funding and research opportunities.

To unsubscribe, simply email the same address and ask to be removed.

Community and research participation

Community membership can be a lasting destination in itself. It carries no research responsibilities. Members may be invited to selected appropriate lab presentations; confidential working meetings remain separate.

Possibility	What it involves
Community member	Discussion, peer learning, announcements, and optional activities.
Project contributor	A separately agreed, bounded role in a real project, with suitable preparation, support, and supervision capacity.
Workstream lead	Explicit responsibility for part of an approved project, based on relevant expertise, readiness, and available capacity.
Graduate supervision applicant	A separate application, supervision decision, and academic admission process.

These are different responsibilities, not ranks or automatic promotions. Members may propose projects among themselves, but a conversation does not create a SAGE Lab project or commit the lab to supervision. Lab projects need explicit ownership, expertise, capacity, and approval.

Attendance and organizing do not guarantee research roles, authorship, recommendation letters, employment, or admission. You do not need to attend to apply for an available research opportunity. An existing application retains its own status and requires a separate response. For students in Prof. Thériault's courses, participation or nonparticipation has no effect on grades.

Read about research opportunities and how we approach supervision capacity.

For further reading, see accessing research experience and preparing for psychology graduate applications. These guides help you explore opportunities and plan your next steps.

Accessing Research Experience

Read online

A shared challenge

Students considering a psychology doctorate are encouraged to gain research experience. Yet supervision opportunities may be insufficient to accommodate everyone interested. This calls for a collective response: asking each laboratory to accept ever more people cannot resolve the problem on its own.

Not finding a placement does not mean you lack potential. Access also depends on projects, funding, expertise and available time. Our supervision capacity page explains the commitments we can realistically make at the SAGE Lab.

A newly appointed professor does not necessarily have more availability. The first year can combine preparing new courses, establishing a lab, applying for grants and learning university procedures. Building the conditions for good supervision takes time before intake can expand.

Broaden the search for opportunities

Explore teams at other universities in Quebec, elsewhere in Canada and, where appropriate, abroad. Some contributions can be entirely remote: literature searches, coding papers, preparing materials, programming, authorized data analysis or reproducibility checks. Online participation can provide substantial experience when it includes a real role and appropriate feedback.

Look for paid positions, funded internships or course-credit opportunities where possible. Remote volunteering may also be an option when a team offers it and the arrangement is appropriate under the institutions' rules. Unpaid participation is not something everyone can afford, and working remotely does not remove training or supervision needs.

Identify a few teams whose research genuinely interests you. Read their website and a relevant paper, then send a concise, tailored inquiry describing your specific interest, current skills, learning goals, realistic availability and ability to work remotely. A CV and an existing work sample can help. Do not promise expertise you do not yet have.

Before accepting, clarify tasks, supervising contact, feedback frequency, expected hours and duration, paid, credited or volunteer status, tool access and departure arrangements. For international roles, also check language, time zones and data-sharing constraints. This page does not guarantee partner teams or external placements.

Research with little additional funding

Avoiding new data collection can reduce spending. It does not make a project cost-free: work time, expertise, software, document access and review remain resources.

Route	Possible contribution	What to check first
Existing lab data	A focused secondary question, robustness analysis or reproduction	Authorized access, consent and ethics, documentation, planned work and responsibilities
Public datasets and research repositories	Secondary analysis suited to a specific question	License, permissions, measurement quality, missing data and generalizability
Existing literature	A focused review, theoretical synthesis or meta-analysis	A useful question, method, access to texts and realistic screening and analysis workload
Existing code, findings and tools	Reproducing analyses, testing, documentation or methodological work	Skills, reuse rights, scientific relevance and a suitable reviewer
Funded new collection	Preparing a funding application for a feasible project	Budget, sample-size justification, ethics, timeline and available supervision

The Open Science Framework and repositories linked to papers can help identify datasets. Library staff can also advise on resources such as Statistics Canada microdata; access conditions and costs vary. Material visible online is not automatically available for reuse. Check the OSF licensing guidance.

A strong course assignment can become the starting point for a writing project. Personal exploratory analysis can support learning and provide a work sample. Before describing it as supervised research, affiliating it with the lab or submitting it to a journal, confirm the appropriate arrangements. Use our student project decision tree.

Collective options to explore

These are proposals for discussion, not services already available:

- **Circulate opportunities more effectively:** share sourced announcements, dates and conditions, including remote roles. Each team remains responsible for recruitment.
- **Share some training:** arrange critical-reading, R, writing or reproducibility workshops with people able to lead them.
- **Build shared projects through bounded modules:** several people contribute reusable outputs to a coherent question rather than each starting an unrelated project.

- **Share supervision where it genuinely exists:** specify responsibilities for an experienced researcher or co-supervisor who has agreed to contribute. Peer help does not replace scientific review.
- **Develop credited or funded opportunities:** explore directed studies, internships and funding with the relevant university contacts.

The SAGE Community can support conversation, peer learning and information sharing. Participation is valuable in itself; it is neither an audition nor automatically supervised research experience.

Testing a solution first requires an owner, a small scope, time and a way to assess outcomes. Success would mean more high-quality learning without overloading students or teams.

A practical next step

Identify a skill to develop, a few relevant teams and a realistic contribution. Protect study time and explore several routes rather than waiting for one placement. Our guide to preparing for psychology graduate applications connects these steps with your training goals.

Skills for Research at the SAGE Lab

Read online

There is no single profile required to join the SAGE Lab. The skills below are useful directions for students and collaborators who want to contribute to rigorous, open, and practically meaningful research. They can be developed gradually through courses, independent projects, community activities, and research experience.

Data analysis and data wrangling

Learn to work carefully with real, messy data: importing and documenting data, checking quality, reshaping tables, handling missing values, visualizing patterns, and choosing analyses that match the research question. We primarily use the open-source language **R**, including the **easystats** ecosystem and related tools.

Programming and research tools

Programming makes research more reproducible and allows useful ideas to become tools that others can inspect and use. Useful projects include **R Markdown or Quarto reports**, data dashboards, **Shiny apps**, websites, simulations, and scripts that automate repetitive work. The goal is not to write code for its own sake, but to make reasoning, analysis, and communication clearer and more reliable.

Scientific writing

Strong research requires clear, precise writing in English. Students should develop the ability to explain a question, build an argument from evidence, describe methods accurately, acknowledge uncertainty, and revise carefully. For people who want to publish internationally, high-level scientific English is an important part of preparing work for selective, high-impact journals.

AI and autonomous agents

AI tools and autonomous agents can support quality checks, programming, analysis, literature work, and presentation. The essential skill is using them **expertly and critically**: writing precise requests, checking sources and code, testing outputs, protecting confidential information, recognizing fabricated or biased results, and taking responsibility for the final work. A plausible AI-generated answer is a starting point for verification, not evidence that the work is correct.

Funding and project development

Research depends on resources, including participant compensation, software and infrastructure, research assistance, travel, and time. Students and collaborators should learn to identify scholarships, fellowships, grants, and other funding opportunities; develop a focused project; write a convincing proposal; and explain why the work matters. Successful independent funding can substantially improve the feasibility of joining a project at the SAGE Lab.

How to start

Choose one small project and make it concrete: reproduce an analysis from an open dataset, write a short report in R Markdown or Quarto, build a simple visualization or dashboard, draft a research question, or identify a funding opportunity and study its requirements. Sharing progress with peers through the SAGE Community can make the learning process more useful and more enjoyable.

These skills are goals, not a checklist or a promise of a research position. They help people make meaningful contributions and make it easier to match an opportunity with the time, preparation, supervision, and funding available.

Explore current research opportunities.

Preparing for Psychology Graduate Applications

Read online

Start with the program that fits your goals

Research doctorates, clinical doctorates and programs combining research and intervention have different aims and selection criteria. Degree names also vary across universities. A psychology PhD does not necessarily qualify you to practise as a psychologist: check the training pathway and program requirements. Université Laval, for example, distinguishes its research doctorate from professional pathways.

Make a comparison table of programs: prerequisites, grades, expected experience, supervisor requirements, documents, deadlines, funding and location constraints. Consult official information for each admission cycle. The advice below can strengthen an application; it cannot guarantee admission.

Priorities to develop

Dimension	Practical advice
Academic results	Aim for the best grades possible, ideally A+, in every course while protecting your well-being. Reserve study time before adding commitments.
Research experience	Seek real tasks, feedback and a contribution you can explain. Meaningful learning and follow-through matter more than simply listing laboratories.
Helping experience and relevant service	For clinical programs, develop appropriate experience through employment, volunteering, placements or community work. Respect training and role boundaries; volunteering does not authorize practising as a psychologist.
Scholarships and prizes	Find eligible, relevant opportunities, prepare early and ask for focused feedback. Awards can recognize your achievements and support your studies financially.
Skills and outputs	Develop examples of critical reading, analysis, writing or programming that you understand and can defend.
References and fit	Work reliably with people who can describe your contribution, then identify supervisors whose interests and availability match your project.

For example, UQAR's official PsyD selection considers academic results, helping and research experience, the proposed project, motivation, interviews and other relevant dossier elements, including scholarships and prizes. An essay supervisor must be found before admission. These criteria should not automatically be applied to every PhD or PsyD.

If you cannot find a research placement

Explore remote roles at other universities, paid or credited opportunities and projects using existing data. Our page on accessing research experience describes these routes and what to clarify.

Develop skills through course assignments and reproducible practice projects too. Describe their status honestly: a workshop or personal project is not automatically a research-assistant role. Community experience can support other aspects of an application without replacing the scientific experience a program expects.

Publishing: a possibility, not a shortcut

A publication can strengthen an application, but research projects and editorial assessment often take longer than an application timeline. Avoid choosing a journal or project simply to add a quick CV entry. A substantial contribution may also be demonstrated through a thesis, poster, analysis sample or manuscript in preparation, depending on what the program accepts.

An especially strong course assignment can sometimes be developed into a book review, commentary, focused synthesis or article if a journal accepts the format and the text makes a genuine contribution. This requires rewriting, checking sources and choosing an appropriate outlet.

During my master's, I developed a course assignment into a book review published in Frontiers in Psychology in 2019. There was no publication fee for me at the time. This illustrates a possible pathway, not a guarantee that the journal still offers the same format or conditions. Check its current article types and fees before preparing a submission.

A book review is not an empirical study; its value in selection depends on the program and your contribution. Clearly distinguish published, accepted, submitted and in-preparation work on your CV. A preprint is not automatically a peer-reviewed article.

Build the application without doing everything at once

1. **Choose a few suitable programs:** record their current criteria and the gaps in your application.
2. **Protect academic results:** plan a sustainable workload and ask for support early when needed.
3. **Choose one or two useful experiences:** prioritize continuity, learning and a realistic role rather than accumulating commitments.
4. **Look for funding:** consult the UQAR scholarship directory, check eligibility and plan for deadlines.

5. **Prepare evidence and references:** keep records of your contributions and request letters early with the program's instructions.
6. **Write a targeted inquiry:** demonstrate fit with a supervisor and project through examples rather than promises of perfect autonomy.

Considering supervision with Prof. Thériault? Read what to know before applying with me for the PsyD. If you are already starting an agreed role, our research-assistant onboarding guide explains how we work. The SAGE Community can support conversation and peer feedback without guaranteeing a placement or admission.

Access to experience and awards is unequal. Applications develop over time, and their outcome does not define your worth. Look for a setting where your goals, resources and available supervision fit.

Official sources consulted September 30, 2026. Requirements, journal formats and opportunities can change; verify them before applying or submitting.

What to know before applying with me for the PsyD

Read online

This guide is for prospective PsyD students seeking doctoral-essay supervision with Prof. Thériault at the SAGE Lab. It concerns non-clinical research, not clinical placements or practice supervision. It does not replace UQAR's admission requirements or constitute an offer of a place.

How to apply

1. Check the official UQAR PsyD requirements and our research themes.
2. Read the expectations below and prepare the information requested in the form.
3. Complete the **PsyD Research Supervision Interest Form**.

Inquiries are assessed individually as supervision capacity and resources permit. The form is the starting point; a separate introductory email is not needed. Submitting it does not guarantee an individual reply, meeting, or supervision agreement. UQAR admission remains a separate process.

Interested in research training without the clinical pathway?

UQAR's personalized PhD (doctorat sur mesure) may be worth exploring with Prof. Thériault and the University. It addresses exceptional situations where no existing program meets the training needs, subject to supervision resources and institutional approval. It is not a PsyD with placements removed: it includes a training plan, coursework, a doctoral examination and a thesis. It does not replace the clinical training required for psychologist licensure. No place or individual eligibility is promised; a supervisor must be found before applying.

A place with genuine supervision

Responsible autonomy can reduce the need for day-to-day assistance and make some projects feasible within limited capacity. It does not remove my responsibility to help define the question, review methods and analyses, discuss interpretations and provide feedback on the essay. A promise to "do everything alone" cannot replace that commitment.

An excellent applicant may therefore be declined when I cannot provide the time, expertise or resources their project requires. That reflects current capacity, not their worth or potential. Before agreeing to supervise, we need a realistic project scope, accessible resources, a learning plan and time for both ordinary meetings and intensive revision periods.

Before contacting me

- Read our lab philosophy: self-compassion, excellence and sustainable work.
- Understand our supervision capacity.
- Explore our research themes and current projects.
- Use Choosing a Student Project to consider scope, data and resources.
- Identify research skills you want to develop.
- Check UQAR's official PsyD requirements.

Community participation is optional and is not a selection criterion. The Idea Garden is an optional archive, not a list of available projects.

What I look for

The following criteria guide assessment of compatibility with my supervision. Actual supervision capacity is a prerequisite even for a strong application. These criteria are assessed together; no fixed numerical weighting is announced.

Criterion	Evidence
Responsible autonomy	Planning, independent learning, checking work and knowing when to seek help
Reliability and continuity	Following through or renegotiating commitments; documenting and handing over work
Scientific rigor and judgment	Sound reasoning, acknowledged limitations, transparency and integrity
Project fit and feasibility	A focused question linked to the lab, realistic scope and available expertise and resources
Communication and use of feedback	Prepared questions, useful updates and thoughtful revisions
Preparation and learning plan	Relevant foundations and a credible plan for missing skills

These are lab-supervision criteria, not UQAR's admission rubric. UQAR includes scholarships and prizes within its broader "other relevant dossier/CV elements" category. Include these achievements in your official application. For my supervision assessment, achievements can provide evidence of a relevant skill without automatic bonus points or double counting. Prior publications, prizes or successful funding are not mandatory lab criteria. Opportunities differ; I consider your own contribution and learning.

What responsible autonomy means

Plan next steps, consult resources, make a reasonable attempt and verify results—including AI-assisted text or code. When you need help, explain the context, what you tried, what remains uncertain and the decision required. Raise issues early when ethics, data access or scientific validity are involved. Seeking appropriate help demonstrates judgment; concealing uncertainty does not.

I do not expect permanent availability or mastery of every method before you begin. Autonomy develops through clear structure, useful feedback and progressively challenging work.

Prepare an initial inquiry

Prepare a CV, an existing work sample with a description of your own contribution, and approximately one page addressing:

1. Which lab question or project interests you, and why?
2. What bounded first contribution could you make? What data, methods and resources would it need?
3. What example shows follow-through despite difficulty? What did you personally do?
4. What can you already do with limited assistance, and where will you need training or review?
5. How would research fit alongside courses, placements and other commitments? How would you handle a delay?
6. How would you contribute toward publication? What writing, revision and follow-up commitments —including after essay deposit—would be realistic?

Use these questions to prepare your responses to the **PsyD Research Supervision Interest Form** and follow its instructions for supporting materials. Do not submit confidential participant or patient information. This inquiry does not replace the official UQAR application.

A concrete, proportionate assessment

An initial fit discussion may be followed by a structured interview using examples of your work. If needed, finalists may complete a short, shared fictional exercise to demonstrate planning, scientific critique and response to feedback. Instructions, time limits and permitted tools are specified beforehand, with equivalent accessible arrangements. The exercise does not produce unpaid usable work for an active project.

Missing skills may lead to a learning plan or a narrower project rather than an automatic rejection. Decisions consider the support available as well as your demonstrated preparation.

Essay, publication and funding

I am looking for a research commitment that goes beyond completing the minimum degree requirements. Applicants should genuinely want to help bring a project to scientific publication and be willing to contribute to rigorous analysis, manuscript writing and revisions, including follow-up after the essay is deposited when needed. Completing the essay is an important milestone, rather than an automatic stopping point for the research contribution. Before agreeing to supervision, we discuss what this commitment involves, how it fits with clinical training, and a realistic scope and period of involvement.

My preference is for essays designed from the outset with a scientific publication goal and meaningful student responsibility for writing. The essay format must be confirmed with the program; existing-data analyses or evidence syntheses are possibilities to discuss, not promises of approved formats.

Completing a degree and having an article accepted are separate outcomes. We agree on writing and revision roles, a realistic period of involvement and a handover plan if circumstances change. Publication cannot be guaranteed, authorship depends on contributions and applicable rules, and participation does not create an indefinite obligation after graduation.

External funding and hosting priority

Among candidates with comparable scientific fit and feasibility, **confirmed compatible external funding receives the highest priority**. It can make hosting feasible, but cannot replace supervision or fit and does not guarantee admission. Applicants without awards may be considered when capacity and resources are available; an application in preparation is not secured funding.

See our doctoral and postdoctoral funding guide: Québec, Canada, UQAR, then international starting points. **FRQ B2 excludes professional doctorates and essays**, so it should not be presented as assured PsyD funding. Federal rules differ: confirm the exact UQAR program's eligibility before preparing an application. A personalized PhD is a separate pathway with its own requirements.

What you can expect from me

Clear mutual expectations, planned meetings and feedback, review of important scientific decisions, respectful comments and space to raise overload or problems honestly. Before any agreement, we confirm milestones, training needs, resources, responsibilities and actual supervision capacity.

UQAR requires applicants to find an essay supervisor before admission. A supervision agreement does not guarantee program admission. Official program information, consulted September 30, 2026.

What to know before proposing a postdoc with me

Read online

A postdoc at the SAGE Lab should advance an important question while developing your scientific independence and career. This guide describes Prof. Thériault's expectations; it is not a job offer or a hosting agreement.

Scientific partnership, not simply additional hands

We favour consolidation of existing projects and programs: a focused question, complementary expertise and a workstream you can genuinely lead. A new proposal may fit when it strengthens that program rather than multiplying commitments.

Our research is non-clinical, mainly online, using existing data or evidence synthesis. We do not provide clinical supervision or in-person clinical data collection. Explore our research, projects, philosophy and supervision capacity first. The Idea Garden is not a list of available projects or positions.

What makes hosting feasible

- A bounded question and first deliverable, with accessible methods and resources.
- Demonstrated expertise and the judgment to check data, analyses, sources and AI-assisted work.
- Ownership of planning, documentation, writing, submission and revisions. Asking for help early is part of responsible autonomy.
- Realistic availability and a continuity or handover plan if circumstances change.
- An explicit mentoring budget covering onboarding, meetings, scientific review, funding applications and administration. A fellowship does not remove these needs.

In return, we agree on realistic mentorship, scientific feedback and professional-development goals. English may be needed for international teamwork and publication; describe your support needs rather than assuming perfect fluency is required.

External funding: hosting priority

Among candidates with comparable scientific fit and feasibility, confirmed external funding compatible with the proposed appointment receives the highest priority. A credible fellowship application can be discussed beforehand; planned, submitted and awarded funding are different states. Start with Québec and Canada in our funding guide.

Funding does not purchase or guarantee a place. We must check duration, amount, eligible expenses, research resources, appointment rules and UQAR approvals. Applicants without a fellowship may be considered when funding and hosting capacity are actually available. Unpaid work is not a workaround for the absence of a funded position.

Prepare your inquiry

Complete the **postdoctoral research interest form**. Describe your question, your personal contribution to previous work, a workstream you could lead, a first four-to-eight-week milestone, availability, funding and support needs. Relevant CV, publication or code links can document your contribution. Do not submit confidential participant, patient or third-party information or identity documents.

Contact us well before a fellowship deadline to agree on the proposal, letters and writing responsibilities. Do not name Prof. Thériault as an agreed host without explicit permission. Preparing an application does not automatically commit the lab to hosting you or covering a funding shortfall.

After an initial fit check

A structured discussion may clarify compatibility, funding and mentoring needs. Any additional assessment will be short, specified in advance and proportionate—not unpaid productive work. Before starting, we confirm institutional status, access, ethics, responsibilities, milestones and funding conditions.

Publication is a shared scientific goal, not a guaranteed result. We agree on writing and revision responsibilities, authorship criteria and handover; no indefinite obligation after the appointment is expected. Excellent applicants may be declined for lack of capacity, not lack of worth. Submitting does not guarantee an individual reply, meeting, position, affiliation or immigration support.

Funding a doctoral or postdoctoral application

Read online

Sources checked October 5, 2026. This is a curated starting point, not an exhaustive catalogue or an eligibility decision. Official rules and institutional deadlines govern. Past deadlines help plan the next cycle; future dates must be confirmed. Countries identify a funding system or required connection, not necessarily every eligible applicant's nationality.

Among candidates with comparable scientific fit and feasibility, confirmed compatible external funding receives the highest priority at the SAGE Lab. Applied-for funding is not secured funding. A personal award may not cover research costs or mentoring. Funding never guarantees admission or hosting.

Start with Québec, Canada and UQAR

Source	Pathway and caution	Deadline / planning
FRQ B2 — research doctorate	Research PhD with thesis; **professional doctorates and essays are excluded**, so do not assume PsyD eligibility. Select Société et culture (formerly FRQSC), Santé or Nature et technologies by research topic.	2027–2028 competition: September 29, 2026, 4 p.m., past. Next cycle unconfirmed.
FRQ B3 — postdoctoral award	Postdocs; check doctorate, residence/status, mobility and host rules.	2027–2028 competition: **October 8, 2026, 4 p.m.** Do not assume hosting agreements and letters can be arranged in a few days.
Canada Graduate Research Scholarship—Doctoral, SSHRC	Select SSHRC, CIHR or NSERC by topic. For a PsyD, obtain confirmation that the program meets the research requirements; UQAR PsyD eligibility is not asserted here.	Direct SSHRC submission: October 19, 2026, 8 p.m. Eastern; institutional submission: usually much earlier internal deadline.
Canada Postdoctoral Research Award, SSHRC	Social sciences/humanities postdoc; other agencies by topic. Check applicant status and tenure-location rules.	SSHRC 2026: September 10, 8 p.m. Eastern, past. Next call unconfirmed; agency deadlines differ.

Source	Pathway and caution	Deadline / planning
UQAR / Foundation award directory	Search entrance, excellence and support awards by program/status. Verify each PsyD listing. No universal local award or automatic postdoc funding is promised here.	Individual listings in the UQAR search tool; confirm with scholarship services and your program.
Mitacs Accelerate	Graduate students/postdocs with an eligible partner and financial contribution—not an unrestricted personal fellowship. Standalone Elevate has been replaced by a postdoc model within Accelerate.	Arrange timeline, contributions and approvals with Mitacs, the partner and UQAR before starting.

Federal rules can accommodate some clinically oriented programs with substantial autonomous research. This **does not itself establish eligibility of UQAR's PsyD**; confirm with the program, scholarship office and agency first. Interagency rules published by NSERC.

For health-related projects, also check CIHR doctoral instructions. SAGE Lab research remains non-clinical; the label "psychology" does not automatically determine the appropriate agency.

International starting points by country

Two additional routes to consider:

- **Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation—2027 competition**: humanities/social-sciences doctorate, subject to program criteria; do not assume PsyD eligibility. The competition-specific page requires eligibility verification by **October 2, 2026 (past)**, references by October 30 and a full application by November 6. A generic page displays a different schedule: confirm with the Foundation before proceeding.
- **PBEEE 2027–2028**: international applicants with institutional preselection; research doctorate (not professional doctorate), postdoc or short visit by stream. Request UQAR preselection well before the **October 27, 2026** FRQ nomination deadline; final submissions from preselected applicants are due **December 2, 2026**. The UQAR postdoc listing directs applicants to **bde-boursescyclesup@uqar.ca**. December 2 is not the first deadline.

Most routes below fund research visits or postdocs, not necessarily an entire PsyD. UQAR hosting, institutional agreements and portability must be confirmed first.

Country / connection	Doctoral or PsyD route	Postdoc / visit	Timing and limitation
Canada / Québec	FRQ B2 for PhD; PsyD funding eligibility to verify; UQAR directory	FRQ B3; Canadian postdoctoral award; Mitacs with partner	See distinctions and dates above.

Country / connection	Doctoral or PsyD route	Postdoc / visit	Timing and limitation
United States	Fulbright Canada—American Students: study/research in Canada; confirm program eligibility	Fulbright—American Scholars: select an award compatible with UQAR	Student 2027–2028: October 6, 2026, earlier campus dates. Scholar: September 15, 2026, past. A visit award need not fund the whole degree or appointment.
Germany	No full UQAR PsyD funding confirmed in this review	DFG Walter Benjamin—fellowship abroad	Rolling applications; German research-system connection and mobility rules apply. Distinct from the German-hosted position.
Switzerland	No full UQAR PsyD funding confirmed in this review	SNSF Postdoc.Mobility: research abroad	February 2 and August 3, 2027, 5 p.m. Swiss time; August 2027 announced as final call. Swiss connection required; scheme in transition.
Japan	No full UQAR PsyD funding confirmed in this review	JSPS Overseas Research Fellowships: eligible researchers going abroad	Check annual Japanese call and institutional dates; next submission date not confirmed here. Not the scheme bringing foreign researchers to Japan.
France	France–Canada Research Fund: doctoral mobility linked to a collaboration	Joint-project mobility, not guaranteed individual postdoc salary	2026-cycle reference: November 2025, past; verify next call. Two researcher leads and eligible universities needed; **UQAR participation must be checked**, not an award automatically available to every SAGE Lab applicant.

From another country? Identify a national award portable to Canada, its rules and deadline in your inquiry. An unconfirmed route is not proof that no funding exists. We add verified opportunities as inquiries arise rather than making country-by-country promises.

Plan an application without last-minute pressure

1. Check degree, status, residence, topic, tenure location, duration and award-combination rules.
2. Check UQAR's internal deadline **before** the agency deadline; ideally start several months ahead.
3. Propose a feasible question and budget, separating personal support from project costs.
4. Explicitly agree on supervision/hosting, letters and writing responsibilities. A letter is not automatically available on request.

5. State what happens if funding is declined or delayed; the lab does not promise replacement funding.

Recheck dates before each competition. See the Canadian interagency calendar and our PsyD and postdoc guides.

Important concepts

Read online

These primers introduce concepts used in SAGE Lab research. Each connects definitions and examples with situational influences, individual differences, major theories, measurement, and open questions.

A guided reading path

1. The science of prosocial behavior maps the questions, constructs, predictors, and major theories.
2. Measuring prosocial behavior compares tasks and reports, and explains what each can establish.
3. Persons and situations examines who helps whom, under which conditions.
4. Empathy and compassion distinguishes understanding, emotional sharing, concern, and distress.
5. Altruism examines other-oriented motivation and its alternatives.
6. From prosocial intention to action follows the path from concern and goals to behavior and recipient outcomes.
7. Robust prosociality introduces the lab's proposed framework for dependable, adaptive helping.

Read in order for a field overview, or start with the question relevant to a study. The methods and theory pages link back to one another.

Explore our research · Lab Manual

The science of prosocial behavior

Read online

The central problem: when do people act to benefit others, what prevents them from doing so, and how can beneficial action be cultivated? The field studies actions, motives, relationships, and social conditions. These are connected objects of study, with different requirements for evidence.

For the SAGE Lab, this map connects established research to our proposed robust prosociality framework.

What are we trying to explain

Concept	Central question	A distinction to retain
Prosocial behavior	Does an action aim to benefit others or produce benefit, under the definition used?	Definitions differ about intentions, consequences, costs, and social approval.
Altruism	Is another's welfare the ultimate motivational goal?	An observable benefit does not identify the motive.
Compassion	Does another's suffering elicit concern and a wish to alleviate it?	Feeling concern and providing effective help are separate outcomes.
Cooperation	How do people contribute under interdependence?	Cooperation can also benefit the actor.
Effective helping	Does the response fit the recipient's needs and improve an outcome that matters?	Frequency and sacrifice do not establish effectiveness.

Choose and state a definition before choosing a task. The review by Pfattheicher, Nielsen, and Thielmann (2022) documents variation in definitions and calls for corresponding operationalizations.

How the field studies these questions

Researchers use resource-allocation games, actual helping opportunities, donations, volunteering, reports from participants and others, and repeated observations in daily life. Each samples particular choices and opportunities. A money allocation is evidence about that decision; extending the claim to a general disposition or everyday helping requires additional validation.

Separate **motivation, opportunity, action, and recipient outcome**. An intervention might increase concern without changing behavior, increase action without increasing benefit, or improve the choice of help without increasing its frequency. See Measuring prosocial behavior.

What predicts behavior

A useful starting question is **which person encounters which recipient, demand, and opportunity?** Dispositions such as social preferences and personality, beliefs about others, perceived need, costs, responsibility, group membership, and available support can all enter the explanation.

A predictor's association depends on the behavior and circumstances studied. A correlation does not establish an intervention target, and an experimentally demonstrated situational effect does not establish what share of all helping is situational. The persons and situations primer develops this logic.

Major explanatory approaches

Approach	Question it addresses	What it does not establish alone
Evolutionary cooperation accounts	Under what selection and interaction conditions can cooperation persist?	The actor's conscious motive in an episode.
Empathy–altruism and egoistic alternatives	Is help directed ultimately at another's welfare, personal relief, or another goal?	Long-term generalization from one choice.
Identity and intergroup accounts	How do shared identities and group boundaries organize concern?	That broader identification always produces effective help.
Norms and moral commitments	How do expectations, responsibility, and internal obligations guide action?	That a stated value is enacted.
Motivation and decision accounts	How do emotions, principles, anticipated impact, and personal consequences shape choice?	A single mechanism behind every act.
Learning and expertise accounts	How do intentions become accessible, practiced, and adaptable responses?	That fluent repetition remains beneficial after needs change.

Evolutionary function, immediate motivation, and development through training are different explanatory questions. The SAVE framework connects appraisal, values, and emotions across levels. Erlandsson and Dickert's typology organizes proposed decision mechanisms into four families: emotions, moral principles, anticipated impact, and anticipated personal consequences. These syntheses help compare explanations.

Landmarks and open questions

The altruism primer introduces classic time-pressure, bystander, empathy–escape, and group-identity studies. Their importance lies in the questions and contrasts they established; individual experiments do not settle every boundary condition.

Current questions include how measures generalize, which interventions change actual behavior, how concern extends across recipients, and whether benefits persist when support or incentives change. Brief interventions can test immediate mechanisms. Durability needs follow-up; transfer needs different tasks or recipients.

Reading path

Start with measurement, then persons and situations, empathy and compassion, and intention to action. Return to robust prosociality to examine the lab's proposed synthesis.

Essential reading: Pfattheicher et al. for definitions; Keltner et al. for SAVE; Erlandsson and Dickert for decision mechanisms. The linked works are starting syntheses, not a complete syllabus.

Browse important concepts

Measuring prosocial behavior

Read online

A measure is a sample of behavior or experience under particular conditions. Choose it for the claim you want to test. A questionnaire about concern, an intention to volunteer, and completed volunteer work are different outcomes.

This primer is a methods guide for the SAGE Lab. Use it alongside the field overview and altruism primer.

Specify the target before the instrument

Record the intended beneficiary, the actor's available options and resources, the opportunity to act, actual costs, and the outcome of interest. Decide whether the claim concerns a state, a decision, a repeated pattern, an intervention effect, or an underlying motive.

Example: "participants allocated more of their bonus" is a narrower claim than "participants became more altruistic." Evidence for the latter needs a definition of altruism and a design that addresses alternative motives.

Common approaches

Method	What it samples	What needs checking
Dictator allocations	Unilateral sharing of a defined resource	Stakes, ownership, recipient, anonymity, framing, and understanding.
Trust and public-goods games	Decisions involving dependence, possible returns, or collective outcomes	Beliefs, strategic incentives, risk, and the specific interaction structure.
Actual helping tasks	Assistance, effort, time, or task substitution	Whether declining is genuinely possible, help is needed, and the action has consequences.
Giving and volunteering records	Behavior with practical consequences	Resources, exposure to requests, access, and unequal opportunities to contribute.
Questionnaires and informant reports	Recalled behavior, self-perceptions, motives, or observed tendencies	Item content, timeframe, reporting bias, and who could observe the behavior.

Method	What it samples	What needs checking
Experience sampling	Repeated recent experiences in everyday contexts	Missed opportunities, selective reporting, burden, missingness, and dependence between observations.

A transfer in a trust game can reflect more than trust alone. Cox (2004) used comparison games to distinguish trust and reciprocity from other-regarding allocation preferences. A consequential choice can still have an ambiguous psychological interpretation.

Reliability and generalization

Repeated trials can improve precision, but repeated versions of one task do not establish transfer to different forms of help. Aggregate across meaningfully chosen occasions, model learning and order effects, and retain information about context.

Evidence about external validity is mixed. Galizzi and Navarro-Martinez (2019) reported limited prediction of field behavior from social-preference games. Wang and Navarro-Martinez (2023) showed that aggregating games and field behaviors can improve prediction. These findings motivate checking measurement error and the target domain rather than treating all games as either universally valid or useless.

Experience sampling brings assessment into daily life. Hofmann et al. (2014) used repeated reports to study everyday moral experience. Such reports remain reports: they do not independently reveal every missed need or establish recipient benefit.

Separate amount from quality

Measure what the actor does and what the recipient receives. More money, time, or effort may be relevant, but benefit also depends on suitability and consequences. Record burden and constraints when interpreting cost.

For intention–action research, distinguish no opportunity, inability to act, refusal, and missing information. If training changes which opportunities people notice or enter, comparing only noticed opportunities may compare different sets of situations.

A practical design checklist

1. Define the construct and the exact claim.
2. Choose a task with consequences and demands relevant to that claim.
3. Measure opportunity and resources separately from willingness.
4. Check comprehension, credible incentives, and possible floor or ceiling effects.

5. Specify a primary outcome and relevant contrasts before inspecting results.
6. Use multiple occasions or methods when making a broad claim.
7. Report what was observed and what remains an inference.

For an intervention, an immediate task tests an immediate outcome. Persistence requires later assessment; transfer requires a different task, context, or recipient. A new scale also needs evidence about structure, reliability, and validity; a label and internally consistent items are insufficient.

Essential reading

- **Cox (2004):** experimental contrasts that clarify the interpretation of trust and reciprocity.
- **Galizzi and Navarro-Martinez (2019), with Wang and Navarro-Martinez (2023):** contrasting evidence about lab–field prediction and aggregation.
- **Hofmann et al. (2014):** an example of repeated assessment outside the laboratory.

Next: persons and situations · Important concepts

Persons and situations in prosocial behavior

Read online

The question is who helps whom, under which conditions. People differ in their actions, situations differ in their demands, and the same person can respond differently across situations. A useful account specifies all three.

For the SAGE Lab, this approach connects the prediction of helping with the proposed robust prosociality framework: does a pattern change when costs, recipients, or demands change?

Dispositions meet opportunities

A disposition is a relatively enduring tendency; an affordance is a possibility or demand that a situation provides. An opportunity to exploit someone, a chance to reciprocate, and dependence on an uncertain partner create different choices.

The Thielmann, Spadaro, and Balliet meta-analysis (2020) relates personality associations across economic games to their situational affordances. This supports specifying the interaction structure before interpreting a trait–behavior association. It does not imply that one trait predicts every kind of help.

Useful predictor families

Predictor family	What to examine	Interpretation limit
Other-regarding preferences and personality	Allocation preferences, non-exploitation, cooperation, and responses to unfairness	A game outcome is not a direct reading of altruistic motivation.
Concern and appraisal	Perceived need, responsibility, emotional responses, and expected effectiveness	Noticing a need and feeling concern need not produce action.
Beliefs about others	Expected cooperation, reciprocity, and trustworthiness	Expectations matter differently when returns are possible or another person can exploit the actor.
Costs and resources	Time, money, effort, competing obligations, and practical ability	The same nominal cost can impose different burdens.

Predictor family	What to examine	Interpretation limit
Recipients and social context	Group boundaries, social norms, observability, and support	Overall giving can conceal selective treatment of recipients.

There is no universal ranking of these predictors. Compare them for a defined behavior, population, and set of conditions, using appropriate uncertainty and out-of-sample prediction where feasible.

What the evidence shows

Popov and Thielmann (2025) tested four proposed core tendencies across six incentivized games. Support for the predicted matches was mixed. The study is useful both as a test of person–situation reasoning and as a warning against treating the framework's predictions as settled facts.

Yelbuz and Thielmann (2026) distinguished general giving from selectivity across recipients, finding largely different personality correlates. Average generosity and the distribution of that generosity therefore deserve separate outcomes.

Experimental evidence also shows that a situation can change helping. In the classic Darley and Batson study (1973), greater hurry reduced stopping to help. This result concerns a particular task and sample; it cannot establish that personality is generally unimportant.

Average levels and response patterns

Illustrative example: two people help equally often when an action is easy. As effort increases, one reduces helping more sharply. They differ in sensitivity to effort even when they match in the easy condition.

For an intervention, distinguish an increase in average helping from a change in sensitivity to a manipulated condition. Test the interaction directly. A significant effect in one condition and a nonsignificant effect in another do not themselves demonstrate a difference.

A flatter cost response is not automatically better. The beneficiary's actual needs, legitimate competing obligations, and the helper's future capacity still matter.

Designing an informative study

Sample repeated opportunities where possible. Separate variation between people from variation within a person; account for repeated observations, learning, and unequal exposure to opportunities. Define which recipients and situations the conclusions cover.

Randomizing a situational feature can support a causal claim about that feature. A measured trait's association or moderation pattern does not show that changing the trait would change helping. Training may also alter where people go and what needs they notice, so standardized tasks and daily-life

measures answer complementary questions.

Strong situational effects and modest trait correlations do not establish a universal division of explained variance. That division depends on the people, behaviors, situations, and reliability of measurement.

Essential reading

- **Thielmann et al. (2020):** the personality–affordance synthesis.
- **Popov and Thielmann (2025):** a direct test, including predictions that received limited support.
- **Yelbuz and Thielmann (2026):** general generosity versus recipient selectivity.
- **Darley and Batson (1973):** a classic experimental manipulation of hurry.

Next: empathy and compassion · Measurement · Important concepts

Empathy and compassion

Read online

Understanding another person, sharing their feelings, and wanting to help them are different psychological responses. “Empathy” is used for several of these, so a study must state which response it measures. None alone demonstrates effective helping.

This distinction is central to the SAGE Lab’s work on contemplative and other prosocial interventions.

Define the response

Term	Working meaning in this primer	What it does not establish
Perspective-taking	Deliberately considering another person’s point of view	That the inferred perspective is accurate.
Affective empathy	Sharing an emotion while distinguishing another’s experience from one’s own	Concern, altruistic motivation, or action.
Empathic concern	Other-oriented feelings such as sympathy and tenderness toward someone in need	A sustained or impartial response.
Personal distress	Self-oriented discomfort when encountering another’s suffering	Whether relief comes through helping or disengagement.
Compassion	Concern for suffering with a wish to alleviate it	Competence or successful benefit.

Terminology overlaps across traditions. Singer and Klimecki (2014) distinguish emotional sharing, distress, and compassionate concern. Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thomas (2010) examine compassion’s proposed affective and evolutionary profile. These are useful distinctions, not a universally adopted vocabulary.

Illustration: someone can understand a colleague’s worry without feeling it, feel distressed by it without knowing how to respond, or offer thoughtful assistance without sharing the same emotion.

What is the explanatory problem

Different accounts ask different questions. Empathy–altruism concerns whether other-oriented concern can produce a goal of benefiting another. Appraisal accounts examine how perceived need, responsibility, and coping shape emotion. Training accounts ask which responses can change and whether those changes affect behavior.

A correlation between reported concern and helping cannot identify the ultimate motive or prove that increasing concern will increase help. The altruism primer explains experimental comparisons between other-oriented and egoistic accounts.

How to measure it

Davis (1983) developed a multidimensional self-report approach that separates perspective-taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy. Subscales should not be treated as interchangeable indicators of one response.

Use separate items or tasks for the proposed processes. Distinguish a report about the present episode from a trait questionnaire about typical reactions. Check whether a “compassion” outcome actually asks about concern, distress, intentions, or past behavior.

Pair psychological outcomes with a relevant behavioral opportunity. Record what participants could do, its cost, and the beneficiary’s outcome. Physiological or brain measures can inform a process hypothesis, but do not replace behavioral or recipient evidence.

Eyal, Steffel, and Epley (2018) distinguish imagining another’s perspective from obtaining information directly. For perspective-taking, distinguish trying to understand from accurate understanding. When a recipient’s report is available, compare the inference with that report rather than assuming that imagining their perspective is successful.

Selected training evidence

Weng et al. (2013) found greater redistribution to a victim after compassion training than after reappraisal training in healthy young adults. The result concerns a consequential task and a specified comparison; it does not establish lifetime change or all forms of helping.

Böckler et al. (2018) found different effects of mental-training modules on task-based and self-reported prosocial outcomes. This supports examining the content of training and the outcome separately.

Kreplin, Farias, and Brazil (2018) found that conclusions about meditation’s prosocial effects depended on outcome and methodological features. Training labels, comparator quality, and follow-up matter when interpreting apparent benefits.

Questions that remain open

Does training broaden concern beyond selected recipients? Does it change distress, motivation, behavioral choice, or their relationship? Are effects retained outside the task and after practice support ends? When does concern lead to unsuitable assistance?

Avoid concluding that empathy is always helpful or always harmful. Also avoid treating mindfulness, loving-kindness, compassion, and perspective-taking as interchangeable interventions. Specify the practice, the proposed mechanism, and the outcome.

Use in SAGE Lab studies

For a proposed intervention, write a prediction that could fail: “this practice changes reported concern and actual helping under these conditions.” Include an appropriate comparison and distinguish the effect on each outcome. A mediation estimate by itself does not establish the causal psychological pathway.

To connect this work to robust prosociality, add the specific follow-up, recipient variation, or challenge needed for the robustness claim.

Essential reading: Singer and Klimecki for distinctions; Goetz et al. for compassion theory; Weng et al. and Böckler et al. for primary training studies; Kreplin et al. for methodological qualifications.

Next: intention to action · Important concepts

Altruism

Read online

A SAGE Lab concept primer for onboarding, study design, and discussion.

Core idea: Helping is observable; altruistic motivation must be inferred. A useful study specifies whose welfare matters, what the helper gives up, and which alternative motives the design can distinguish.

Updated November 19, 2026.

Browse all concept primers

Definition and neighboring concepts

Psychological altruism is motivation whose ultimate goal is to improve another person's welfare. Feeling good afterward does not, by itself, show that feeling good was the goal. **Prosocial behavior** is the broader category of actions intended to benefit others; those actions can have altruistic, self-interested, or mixed motives. This distinction follows the motivational approach developed by Batson and colleagues.

Biological altruism concerns fitness costs to an actor and benefits to a recipient, rather than conscious intentions. **Cooperation** concerns contributions to shared or interdependent outcomes and can benefit everyone involved. Evolutionary explanations and psychological explanations therefore answer different questions. Nowak, 2006.

Empathic concern is feeling for someone in need; **personal distress** is one's own discomfort in response to that need. Both can precede helping, but they imply different motivational accounts. Batson et al., 1981.

Examples and boundary cases

Imagine someone spending an hour helping a colleague.

- If improving the colleague's welfare is the ultimate goal, the motivation is altruistic.
- If the ultimate goal is obtaining a future favor or public recognition, the same action has a self-interested explanation.
- If both goals matter, the motivation is mixed.
- If the colleague does not actually benefit, an altruistic intention and an ineffective outcome can coexist.

These are illustrative distinctions, not diagnoses that an observer can make from a single action. **Neither a visible sacrifice nor an anonymous donation uniquely identifies a motive.**

Situational determinants

These influences primarily concern helping or cooperation. Their effects do not automatically establish altruistic motivation.

Influence	What matters	Evidence and boundary
Time and opportunity costs	Can someone stop, and what must they give up?	In the classic seminary study, participants under greater time pressure were less likely to stop for someone apparently needing help. This was a specific experiment, not evidence that dispositions never matter. Darley and Batson, 1973.
Other bystanders and responsibility	Does someone feel personally responsible, or expect others to act?	A meta-analysis supports an average inhibitory bystander effect, with important moderation. In dangerous situations, others may provide support and the inhibition can weaken or disappear. Fischer et al., 2011.
Shared identity	Who counts as one of us?	Soccer-fan experiments found more helping toward an ingroup member; making a broader identity salient extended help to some former outgroup members. Levine et al., 2005.
Empathic concern	Does the situation evoke concern for this particular person?	Experiments manipulating empathy and ease of leaving supported the empathy–altruism account. Distinguish concern for the recipient from the helper's distress. Batson et al., 1981.
Moral obligation	Are personal norms activated by the need and a sense of responsibility?	Norm activation theory connects helping to felt moral obligation, whose influence depends on activation conditions. Schwartz, 1977.
Future interaction and reputation	Can helping generate later returns, directly or through others?	Direct and indirect reciprocity offer accounts of cooperation sustained by future benefits. Such behavior need not imply an altruistic ultimate motive. Nowak, 2006.

Dispositional determinants

Dispositions describe relatively enduring differences; they are usually measured rather than randomly assigned. Associations with helping therefore do not, on their own, establish causation.

Honesty–Humility and Agreeableness: A large meta-analysis of economic games found that Honesty–Humility was especially relevant to avoiding exploitation. Agreeableness associations depended on the personality model and the situation; HEXACO Agreeableness was particularly relevant to responding without retaliation. These are predictors of game behavior, not direct measures of altruistic motives. Thielmann et al., 2020.

Social value orientation: People differ in how they weight their own and others' outcomes. The SVO Slider Measure assesses allocation preferences, including concern for joint outcomes and equality. It should not be interpreted as a universal altruism score. Murphy et al., 2011.

Personal norms: Enduring moral obligations may influence helping when activated by the situation. Holding a norm and acting on it are separate steps. Schwartz, 1977.

The organizing question is **which situation allows which disposition to matter?** Opportunities for exploitation, reciprocity, and dependence under uncertainty help explain why trait associations vary across tasks. Thielmann et al., 2020.

Major theoretical accounts

These are complementary starting points across levels of explanation, rather than a ranking by influence.

Account	What it explains	Useful distinguishing question
Empathy–altruism	Concern for another can produce helping aimed at that person's welfare.	Does helping persist when leaving the distressing situation is easy? Batson et al., 1981.
Egoistic relief accounts	Helping can be a means of reducing the helper's own distress.	Can the helper obtain relief without improving the recipient's welfare? This is the competing explanation tested in the empathy experiments. Batson et al., 1981.
Warm-glow giving	Giving can reflect both concern for a public good and satisfaction from one's own contribution.	Does giving depend on the act of contributing as well as on the total benefit provided? Andreoni, 1990.
Norm activation	Personal moral obligation motivates action under relevant activation conditions.	Does responsibility change the relationship between personal norms and helping? Schwartz, 1977.
Social identity and self-categorization	Shared group membership helps define whose needs prompt intervention.	Does broadening the salient identity broaden the circle of help? Levine et al., 2005.
Evolutionary cooperation accounts	Kin selection, reciprocity, and population structure explain conditions under which costly cooperation can evolve.	Which fitness benefits, repeated interactions, or structures sustain the behavior? These models do not settle the actor's conscious motive. Nowak, 2006.

Measures and study design

Match the measure to the claim. Economic games capture particular allocation or interaction decisions: dictator giving, trust, reciprocity, and public-goods contributions differ in their incentives and strategic demands. Their personality associations vary accordingly. Thielmann et al., 2020. The SVO Slider instead measures preferences over distributions between self and other. Murphy et al., 2011.

For SAGE Lab studies, a useful design checklist is:

1. Specify the target: helping behavior, recipient benefit, cooperation, or altruistic motivation.
2. Identify the recipient and measure both the helper's cost and the recipient's benefit where feasible.
3. State competing explanations, such as reputation, reciprocity, moral obligation, or relief from distress.
4. Manipulate conditions that make those explanations predict different choices. Anonymity addresses an audience explanation; it does not eliminate every self-interested motive.
5. Use repeated opportunities or more than one task before making broad claims about a person's disposition.
6. Keep self-reported motives, observed actions, and recipient outcomes separate in analysis and reporting.

These are proposed design principles for the lab. The empathy–escape experiments provide a concrete example of testing motives through differing predictions rather than labeling behavior alone.

Evidence and open questions

Useful anchors: Time pressure and social identity can change helping in experiments; bystander inhibition is supported across studies but depends on context; personality predicts some variation in economic-game behavior. The linked studies above support these narrower conclusions.

Questions that remain open: How well does a particular task generalize to everyday helping? Which motives coexist in a given decision? Does concern extend beyond a salient recipient or group? Does an intervention increase actual recipient welfare, or primarily the visibility and frequency of helping?

For SAGE Lab discussions: When someone calls a result "altruism," first ask what was measured and which interpretation the design supports.

Essential reading

Start with the first three for motivation, individual differences, and situational evidence. The remaining works extend the theory and measurement.

1. **Batson, C. D., Duncan, B. D., Ackerman, P., Buckley, T., and Birch, K. (1981).** Is empathic emotion a source of altruistic motivation? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 40*, 290–302. Foundational experiments distinguishing concern for others from personal relief.
2. **Thielmann, I., Spadaro, G., and Balliet, D. (2020).** Personality and prosocial behavior: A theoretical framework and meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 146*, 30–90. Individual differences across economic games.
3. **Fischer, P., et al. (2011).** The bystander-effect: A meta-analytic review on bystander intervention in dangerous and non-dangerous emergencies. *Psychological Bulletin, 137*, 517–537. Situational effects and their moderators.
4. **Darley, J. M., and Batson, C. D. (1973).** From Jerusalem to Jericho: A study of situational and dispositional variables in helping behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 27*, 100–108. Time pressure and helping.
5. **Levine, M., Prosser, A., Evans, D., and Reicher, S. (2005).** Identity and emergency intervention. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 31*, 443–453. Group boundaries and helping.
6. **Schwartz, S. H. (1977).** Normative influences on altruism. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 10*, 221–279. Personal norms and moral obligation.
7. **Andreoni, J. (1990).** Impure altruism and donations to public goods: A theory of warm-glow giving. *The Economic Journal, 100*, 464–477. Mixed motives in giving.
8. **Nowak, M. A. (2006).** Five rules for the evolution of cooperation. *Science, 314*, 1560–1563. Evolutionary mechanisms.
9. **Murphy, R. O., Ackermann, K. A., and Handgraaf, M. J. J. (2011).** Measuring social value orientation. *Judgment and Decision Making, 6*, 771–781. Allocation-preference measurement.

Our proposed robust prosociality framework

The robust prosociality introduction extends the question from why people help to when beneficial helping remains dependable and adapts to changing needs. The framework remains provisional; dependable behaviour alone does not establish altruistic motivation.

For the wider field, start with the science of prosocial behavior. For study design, see measurement and the intention–action gap.

From prosocial intention to action

Read online

Wanting to help and carrying out useful help are different outcomes. The intention–behavior gap asks why an endorsed goal does not always become an action. For prosociality, a further question is whether the action actually benefits its recipient.

This primer connects measurement with the SAGE Lab's proposed robust prosociality framework.

Distinguish the targets

A benevolent aspiration is a broad wish for others to fare well. A behavioral intention concerns a specified action, recipient, and occasion. An ultimate motive concerns the goal served by acting. These are different claims: an intention to donate does not alone establish why the person intends to donate.

Consider someone who intends to support an overwhelmed colleague. They may never notice a practical opportunity, lack time or skills, forget the intention, or offer assistance the colleague does not need. Each calls for a different explanation.

A guide to locating the obstacle

Question	Possible obstacle	What to record
Was there a relevant opportunity?	No need, request, access, or feasible option	Exposure, resources, and available alternatives.
Was the opportunity recognized?	Inattention or mistaken interpretation	Recognition separately from the action.
Was a goal or intention activated?	Competing goals, weak commitment, or changed priorities	Episode-specific intention and reasons.
Was a response carried out?	Forgetting, fear, practical difficulty, or lack of skill	Actual behavior, timing, and costs.
Did the response help?	Poor fit, incorrect assumptions, or changed needs	Recipient feedback and meaningful consequences.

This is a design aid, not an established compulsory sequence. People may act habitually without reporting a fresh intention, and action or feedback can change subsequent motivation.

What existing evidence supports

Webb and Sheeran (2006) synthesized experiments that changed intentions and assessed subsequent behavior. Intention changes were accompanied by smaller behavioral changes. This supports separating the outcomes; it does not provide a universal gap size for prosociality.

Implementation intentions link a relevant cue to a planned response: “If this situation occurs, then I will do this.” The Sheeran, Listrom, and Gollwitzer synthesis (2025; online 2024) finds benefits across diverse outcomes and identifies conditions that moderate them. Planning is a candidate tool for enactment, not a guarantee of effective or enduring helping.

Self-determination theory distinguishes personally endorsed action from externally pressured or internally compelled action. Autonomous motivation includes valued activities that are not enjoyable. Ryan and Deci (2020). Research on helping also examines the quality of motivation and helper and recipient well-being. Weinstein and Ryan (2010).

Motivation and implementation need different tests

To test stronger motivation, assess the relevant goal or concern. To test enactment, provide or observe a feasible opportunity and assess what happens. To test effectiveness, measure the recipient’s outcome.

Illustrative plan: “When I notice that a colleague is overloaded, I will ask which specific task would be useful to take on.” This prepares information seeking, rather than prescribing the same act every time. Whether it helps in a given setting remains an empirical question.

Training can target commitment, noticing, planning, skill, or the environment. A useful study names the proposed obstacle and measures it independently. Do not interpret any positive intervention effect as proof of the preferred mechanism.

Avoid misleading comparisons

Measure intentions before the relevant action and specify the time window. Match the intention’s specificity to the behavior: a broad wish to benefit humanity is a poor stand-in for an intention to volunteer tomorrow.

Repeated observation can separate typical differences between people from changes within a person. Treat no opportunity, inability, refusal, and missing reports separately. If training changes which opportunities are noticed, conditioning only on noticed opportunities can produce a selected comparison. A sequential pattern or mediation estimate alone does not establish a causal chain.

A comparison of experienced practitioners with nonpractitioners cannot isolate the causal effect of training from selection and other differences. Random assignment to specified training components addresses a narrower causal question.

Connection to robust prosociality

A dependable response may require personally endorsed concern and learned enactment, with appropriate opportunities and support. This is part of the lab's proposed account, not a conclusion established by the studies above. Persistence, transfer, recipient effectiveness, and helper sustainability require their own outcomes.

Essential reading: Webb and Sheeran for experimental intention change; Sheeran et al. for planning; Ryan and Deci for motivational distinctions; Weinstein and Ryan for helping-specific motivation and well-being.

Continue to robust prosociality · Important concepts

Robust prosociality

Read online

A proposed SAGE Lab framework. We use *robust prosociality* to describe beneficial helping that remains dependable across specified changes in time, demands, settings, recipients, or personal costs, while allowing sustainable participation. The boundaries and explanatory model remain under development.

The central question is: **how can concern for others become dependable action when circumstances become less supportive—or when the familiar way of helping no longer works?**

Why robustness matters

A sincere intention, a generous choice in one task, and effective help over time are different achievements. In this proposal, robustness concerns a pattern of behaviour under named conditions. It can describe a person's helping in a particular domain, an intervention's effects, or the support provided by a social system.

Dependability does not mean repeating an action regardless of its consequences. If a recipient's needs change, reliable helping may require a different response, asking for guidance, or referring to someone better equipped. Limits and recovery can support continued participation; unlimited self-sacrifice is not the criterion.

Seven proposed dimensions

Dimension	What we would test
Persistence	Does helping or an intervention effect endure over a justified period, including after support is withdrawn?
Resilience	Does it remain dependable under a specified challenge, such as distraction or time pressure?
Generalization	Does it transfer to meaningfully different situations, tasks, or recipients?
Cost tolerance	How does behaviour change as actual costs in time, effort, or resources increase?
Translation into action	Does concern or intention lead to observable action when a feasible opportunity exists?
Recipient effectiveness	Does the intended beneficiary actually benefit?

Dimension	What we would test
Helper sustainability	Can participation continue without unacceptable burden or harm to the helper?

These dimensions may dissociate. A routine can persist while becoming ineffective; willingness to accept greater immediate costs can undermine future participation. We therefore propose reporting a **profile of outcomes and conditions**, rather than assuming a single trait or adding the dimensions into an unvalidated score.

Behavioural robustness also differs from robustness of scientific evidence. Dependable helping needs direct observation; reliable measurement, defensible analyses, and appropriate samples support the conclusions drawn about it.

A candidate explanation

Our current working account distinguishes two processes:

- **Motivational integration:** concern is personally endorsed, potentially reducing the recurrent need to persuade or pressure oneself to help.
- **Learned enactment:** practice makes it easier to notice opportunities, retrieve feasible responses, and carry them out. Learning may produce a fixed routine or a flexible procedure for selecting and revising help.

This account draws on existing work. Self-determination theory distinguishes autonomous endorsement from external pressure or internal compulsion; an activity can be freely valued without being enjoyable. Ryan and Deci, 2020. Autonomous helping has also been studied in relation to helper and recipient well-being. Weinstein and Ryan, 2010. Moral expertise provides an antecedent for connecting learning, perception, and skilled action. Narvaez and Lapsley, 2005.

Our proposed synthesis is that cultivation may reduce the effort needed to motivate oneself to help **while preserving the thought needed to work out what would help**. Identity may support endorsement or shape whose needs are noticed; it is not assumed to be a separate necessary ingredient. Opportunity, information, resources, and institutional support remain part of the explanation.

A testable contrast

Imagine two training approaches that initially produce similarly fluent, beneficial helping. One teaches a familiar action; the other teaches how to choose a response using information about the recipient’s needs. Now change which action benefits the recipient.

The proposal predicts that learning an adaptive procedure should support more appropriate switching than learning only the fixed act, under conditions where the new information can be understood and used. Measure both the response and its benefit. If the approaches perform equivalently with adequate

measurement and precision, that would challenge the proposed distinction in that setting.

This is a candidate test, not an established finding. Whether the account adds explanatory value beyond existing motivation, habit, and expertise theories remains an open question.

Scope of the concept

Robust prosociality takes a broad view of beneficial behaviour, which can involve altruistic, self-interested, or mixed motives. The framework asks when helping remains dependable and effective; claims about its underlying motivation require separate evidence.

The framework remains a proposal. We have not established a validated scale, a universal moral trait, or the novelty of the term or model.

Read the altruism primer · Browse important concepts

The field overview, measurement guide, and intention–action primer provide foundations for evaluating this proposed framework.

Lab Member Onboarding

Read online

Welcome to the SAGE Lab! Our lab manual lives in focused website pages. Read the essentials below, then return to the relevant page when you need it. You do not have to memorize the whole site.

This guide is for people starting an agreed research role. If you are exploring opportunities, begin with Join the Lab.

The core readings apply to research assistants, graduate students, postdocs, and other research members. Agree with your supervisor on any additional readings for your role.

Your first readings

Follow this order and tick each box after reading. These boxes are a personal aid, not a form sent to the lab; they reset when you reload the page. Note questions for your first project meeting.

☐ **1. Understand how we work**
Lab Philosophy

Rigor, self-compassion and excellence, skill development, and sustainable work.

☐ **2. Understand supervision capacity**
Supervision Capacity

Why scientific review takes time and new projects need realistic commitments.

☐ **3. Connect with peers**
SAGE Community

Peer learning and mutual help. Community participation and research roles have different responsibilities.

☐ **4. Choose skills to develop**
Skills for Research at the SAGE Lab

Choose a realistic first learning goal for your role. You are not expected to master every skill before starting.

☐ **5. Read our AI policy**
AI Policy and Resources

Use AI to deepen your understanding and raise scientific standards. Learn the expectations for verification, confidentiality, and documenting AI use before using it for lab work. Current members should read this policy too.

☐ **6. Explore our research questions**
Research

Identify themes that interest you and how your contribution might fit.

☐ **7. Look at work already underway**
Projects

Explore existing studies, tools and manuscripts before proposing something new. Confirm a project's current status and supervision before joining it.

☐ **8. Understand how to choose a project**
Choosing a Student Project

Use the decision tree to connect your goals with available data, funding and supervision. Prepare the project discussion before starting new work.

☐ **9. Explore the Idea Garden (optional)**
Idea Garden

An archive of ideas to revisit or combine. If you have a similar idea, we can check what is already in the bank and build on it. An entry does not mean a project is active, funded or ready to launch. You can start your agreed role without reading the archive.

Readings for your role

- **PsyD students:** revisit the supervision expectations and confirm how they apply to your agreed project.
- **Postdocs:** revisit the postdoctoral guide and confirm your mentoring and research responsibilities.
- **Members preparing doctoral or postdoctoral funding applications:** consult the funding guide.

Use the Lab Manual to find other guidance as your responsibilities develop.

Advice for flourishing at the SAGE Lab

Planning a PhD or PsyD application? Our graduate application guide brings together advice on grades, research, helping experience, funding and publications. If you need to explore other research opportunities, see accessing research experience.

Protect your academic record

Aim for the best grades you can in every course, ideally A+, while protecting your well-being. Keep time for studying before adding research commitments. Strong academic results matter for many doctoral admissions and scholarships. For example, UQAR's professional doctorate in psychology considers academic results alongside research experience and other criteria. Grades strengthen a dossier without guaranteeing admission.

Apply for funding

Look for every funding opportunity you are eligible for and aim to apply to each relevant one. Check eligibility, fit, documents and deadlines early so applications fit alongside your courses and well-being. Start with the UQAR scholarship directory and ask about the lab's student-funding resources.

Funding can support you financially, make research feasible and strengthen your CV. Awards also count among the achievements considered in some admissions and funding evaluations, including the FRQ doctoral scholarship criteria. Criteria vary by program. We want the SAGE Lab to build a strong funding record by sharing what we learn. Funding applications are one of Prof. Thériault's strengths and a skill we can develop together. Bring a prepared draft and specific questions when asking for feedback.

Develop autonomy and ask for help thoughtfully

Look for ways to learn and move projects forward with limited demands on Prof. Thériault's time. Consult documentation, try a bounded first step and seek suitable peer feedback. When asking Prof. Thériault for help, summarize what you tried, what remains unclear and which decision you need. More autonomous contributions can make it feasible to support more people.

Ask early when you are genuinely blocked or a decision affects ethics, data access or scientific validity. Autonomy includes recognizing when supervision is necessary. The research supervisor remains responsible for the guidance and review agreed for your role.

Help bring research to publication

When you start or join a research project, commit to helping bring it to scientific publication, including careful revisions when the work takes time or becomes challenging. Agree on your role, the intended manuscript, your deliverables and a continuation plan. Publication is a shared goal.

If circumstances change, discuss them early and arrange a documented handover. Protecting well-being may require rescoping or ending participation responsibly. Keep your contribution usable by the next person. Publication depends on the work and journal decisions, and authorship depends on actual contributions. A bounded training exercise does not automatically become a paper or an open-ended obligation.

Choose projects that fit our resources

Consider existing grants, data and supervision before proposing new data collection. Options requiring little or no additional spending still need expertise, time and review. Examples to discuss include:

- Analyses of suitable public or existing data, including material on the Open Science Framework (OSF).
- A carefully scoped meta-analysis or theoretical review.
- Metascience research, such as a question connected with the Missing Majority Dashboard, if its data and methods support it.

- Reproduction or replication work, potentially with the Institute for Replication, when skills and supervision fit.

These are possibilities, not approved projects. A useful proposal identifies the question, available materials, likely output and help required.

Before your first project meeting

Bring your questions, realistic availability and one skill you want to develop. Together, confirm your supervising contact, first deliverable, feedback arrangements and where to save your work. Identify the key papers for your project and agree on a useful stopping point and handover plan. Document files, scripts, sources, decisions and unfinished work from the beginning.

Our common aim: warmth and competence, self-compassion and excellence. We want you to learn, do work you can trust and build a sustainable place in research.

Choosing a Student Project

Read online

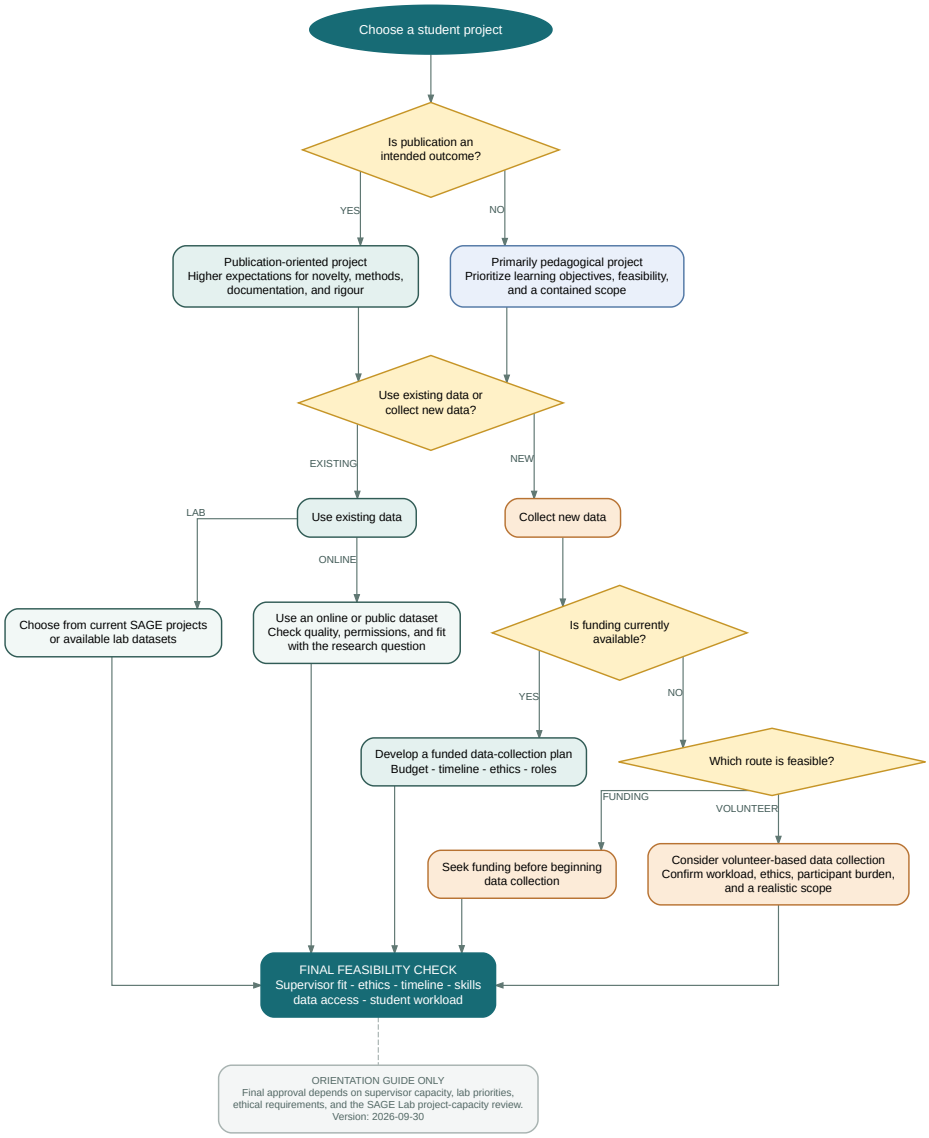
A good student project fits your learning goals, the lab’s research and the time available to do it well. This decision tree helps you prepare a conversation about a project. Start with the existing project portfolio, then consider the purpose, data and resources your contribution would need.

The tree is an orientation guide. Every route still needs a suitable supervisor, appropriate skills, ethical and institutional requirements, and a realistic workload. Funding alone does not create supervision capacity. Read our approach to supervision capacity alongside this page.

Student project decision tree

Open the full-size diagram
Open the printable PDF (new tab)

STUDENT PROJECT DECISION TREE



English version, reviewed September 30, 2026. Select the diagram to view it separately.

The route in words

1. Clarify the purpose

Is scientific publication an intended outcome? For publication-oriented research, discuss the contribution, methods, documentation and manuscript responsibilities from the beginning. A primarily pedagogical project may instead focus on a bounded learning objective. Both require care, integrity and appropriate ethics. Agree on the purpose rather than assuming every training exercise becomes a paper.

2. Identify the data

If suitable data already exist, consider current SAGE projects or available lab datasets. Public or online datasets are another possibility: check their quality, access conditions, permissions and fit with the question. Existing data can reduce the need for a new collection but still require methodological expertise and review.

If your question requires new data, discuss the collection plan and the resources it would need.

3. Consider the resources for new data

With funding available, develop a plan covering the budget, timeline, ethics and roles. Without funding, consider seeking support before collecting data, or whether a collection involving volunteer help is genuinely feasible and permitted. Discuss workload, participant burden and the scope of the work. The volunteer route is not permission to create an unpaid research role or to bypass institutional requirements. If neither route fits, reconsider the scope or the use of existing data.

4. Check feasibility together

Confirm supervision fit and capacity, ethics, timeline, skills, data access and student workload. Clarify which lab priority the project advances and what existing commitment it would displace. A feasible proposal also identifies the first useful deliverable, how much PI review it needs, and who can continue the work if someone leaves.

What to bring to the project discussion

Prepare a short proposal with your question, the intended output, available materials, your role and realistic availability. Identify the help needed, foreseeable costs and the next decision. We can then agree on a bounded module or discuss whether a new project fits.

The research-assistant onboarding guide provides the wider reading path. The skills guide helps you choose learning goals, while the SAGE Community offers peer exchange. The Idea Garden remains an optional archive for inspiration, rather than a list of approved projects.

AI Policy and Resources

Read online

The SAGE Lab encourages thoughtful use of AI for research and learning. Use it to improve the work and develop your understanding. You remain responsible for what you submit, share, or publish.

Raise the standard

Our aim is higher standards at the same level of effort, rather than the same standards with less effort. Reinvest time saved in learning, checking sources, testing analyses, and considering alternative explanations. Verification is part of the research effort. This means making better use of a sustainable workload, not extending working hours.

Use AI with purpose

AI can help explain methods, explore ideas, write and debug code, improve prose, and critique a study or manuscript. Choose tools that fit the task and discuss substantial uses with your supervisor or collaborators. Agree on access and costs before committing to paid tools; do not assume a personal subscription is required.

Build understanding you can use

Use AI to learn concepts and methods that would otherwise be too difficult or time-consuming to approach. Ask for worked examples, competing explanations, practice problems, and feedback on your reasoning. Develop your foundations in **statistics, research design, and critical thinking** so you can judge whether an AI's choices and conclusions are justified.

The goal is a **virtuous cycle**: AI supports deeper learning; deeper understanding improves your ability to question and check AI; better checks strengthen both your research and your understanding.

Can you explain why a method fits the question, identify its assumptions, recognize a misleading result, and check it against data or original sources? If not, use that gap to guide further learning and supervision. For training tasks, agree on what to attempt independently and what assistance is appropriate. Read the original papers you rely on, and bring uncertainties and errors to supervision early.

Verify before sharing

- **Sources:** open the original reference and check that it supports the claim. Never cite a source solely because an AI supplied it.

- **Analyses:** run the code, inspect the data transformations, and check assumptions and results against the research question.
- **Writing:** check facts, numbers, quotations, and the strength of conclusions. You should be able to explain and defend the work.
- **AI critiques:** assess each suggestion against the evidence. A confident review—or agreement among several models—is not independent confirmation.

Before circulating a manuscript, consider an AI-assisted critique or reproducibility check when permissions and confidentiality allow. Use the findings to guide checks and discussion with coauthors.

Tools to explore at this step:

- Stanford Agentic Reviewer (PaperReview.ai): manuscript feedback informed by related work on arXiv. Its documentation notes that coverage may be weaker outside arXiv-heavy fields; it currently supports English papers.
- statcheck: a complementary **non-AI** tool that recalculates p-values from supported statistical tests reported in APA style. It checks reporting consistency, not whether the analysis or design is appropriate.

A manuscript review does not establish computational reproducibility: rerun the analysis code against the appropriate data and compare outputs with the reported results. Check permissions, data handling, and costs before uploading material to any service; these links are options to evaluate, not required purchases or guarantees of accuracy.

For examples of AI-assisted research reports, explore The File Drawer, an archive of studies and explorations with provenance shown per paper. Treat its reports as starting points for examining the underlying work, rather than established findings or a manuscript-review service.

Keep code under version control, test reusable functions, and maintain clear documentation. AI-generated code needs the same review as other research code.

Protect data and confidential work

Do not put identifiable participant data, confidential records, credentials, or material received under peer-review confidentiality into an AI service without explicit authorization and suitable safeguards. Removing names alone may not make data anonymous. Check institutional requirements, ethics approvals, consent, agreements, and the tool’s data handling before uploading research material. When uncertain, ask before sharing; use public or synthetic examples while resolving the question.

Make substantial use traceable

Keep enough information to understand and reproduce AI-assisted research: the tool and model, date or version, relevant prompts and settings, code, outputs, and human checks. Record consequential decisions. For AI used as a research method, document the procedure in the methods and preserve appropriate materials.

Discuss substantial assistance with coauthors and disclose it as required by the journal, funder, institution, or course. Human authors retain responsibility; AI tools do not receive authorship. Course and peer-review rules may differ from everyday lab practice.

Respect readers' time

When sharing AI-generated suggestions or critiques, label them clearly. Read and edit material before circulating it; send colleagues a concise account of what matters and what you need from them.

Resources for discussion

- King & Worthington (2026): AI Article Reviews Dominate Human Peer Reviews at Their Best: Evidence and Policy Choices. Research on AI-generated reviews and journal policy; its findings should be interpreted within the study's scope.
- Michael Frank: My lab's AI policies and norms. Practical guidance on AI review, disclosure, data protection, code quality, and learning. Its manuscript-writing restrictions are specific to that lab.

These practices will evolve as tools, evidence, and institutional requirements change.