



UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
AMHERST
200 Hicks Way
934 Thompson Hall
Amherst, MA 01003-9277

Department of Sociology
Computational Social Science Institute
email: mpachucki@umass.edu
phone: 413-545-7526
fax: 413-545-3204

Dear UMass Sociology Graduate Student,

I have drafted this short handbook to give you a sense of what I do as a faculty mentor and how I can best support students who choose to train with me. *Equity and access in mentoring are critically important, and I strive to be consistent with all students I work with.* This is in keeping with our [department values statement](#) that, "...all members of the Sociology community -- faculty, staff, and students -- be mindful of our responsibility to create an environment that is welcoming to all, and where each person feels accepted, included, seen, heard, valued, and safe."

In some ways that conversation is made easier by having a common starting point – by outlining what matters to me, and how I work. I'll want to know what matters to you, and how you work as well. Advising and mentoring are relationships, and as such they change over time – the guidance that I give you in your first year is going to be different than the guidance I'm giving you in your 3rd and 5th years as you're at a different stage of development as a scholar. If you're interested in working with me, we'll have a direct and open conversation about expectations and norms about what that looks like and put together plans that you can continually refer back to, and that we can revise and update as necessary.

Accordingly, this guidebook is meant to be a living, evolving document, as well. Its structure parallels the form of what might be called a "lab group manual" in other departments, and I took inspiration from a workshop that I attended here at UMass given by the *National Research Mentoring Network*. Yet in our department we don't have "lab groups" – there's no "Pachucki Lab," for instance – how we work as social scientists is not the same model as exists in many psychological, biological, physical sciences, or public health. But also, this is just one model of mentorship that I've built from taking what were the best aspects of the mentoring I've received during my career. It was what worked for me, and it may not work for everyone.

Over the course of your graduate career, *you should be cultivating relationships with multiple faculty members who can help expose you to different ways of thinking* and who will challenge you in a variety of ways. If you're interested in my philosophy about science and teaching, you can visit the "[scientific values](#)" tab of my website. I hope you find the contents of this document to be a useful starting place for conversations that support your academic and personal goals.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark C. Pachucki".

Mark C. Pachucki

Mentorship Philosophy & Scientific Norms

Prof. Mark C. Pachucki
Dept. of Sociology, UMass Amherst
v. 2/2020

Contents

1. Advising & Mentoring

- Department academic advising (1)
- Serving on one of your committees (1)
- Communication norms & expectations (1-2)

2. Research training

- It takes a village (to train a scientist) (2)
- Conducting research (2)
- Ethics and human subjects processes (2)
- Publication norms (3)
- Authorship norms (3)
- Co-authorship opportunities (3)
- Transparency and replicability (3)

3. Professional development

- Funding your research and writing grant proposals (4)
- Scientific conferences (4)
- Letters of reference (4)

4. Teaching pedagogy

- Guest-lecturing opportunities (5)
- Teaching observation & feedback (5)

5. Expectations, Ownership, and Further Questions for Discussion (5-6)

A brief note on terminology

What is the difference between advising and mentoring? These terms mean different things to different people. To me, (department academic) advising mostly involves helping you to be successful in identifying and accomplishing the kinds of coursework we have in our department that are necessary to complete your degree program; helping you out with organization and planning; and giving you advice on your academic needs and interests. I think about mentorship as a more intensive relational effort (on both our parts!) to helping you accomplish more global goals to articulate with gaps in knowledge in our field, acquainting you with some of the “hidden curriculum” of graduate school, providing you professional development, and helping you conduct your research as a member of a comps or dissertation committee. This document articulates and attempts to make explicit my commitment to all students who are working with me in any capacity.

1. Advising and Mentoring

Department academic advising. Every year the department asks faculty to pair with incoming graduate students with whom there may be an intellectual affinity and to help them get acquainted with their program and department life. If you are paired with me as an academic advisor, know that I'm committed to helping you navigate the PhD program, and we will set up regular meetings during the semester; often, once per month is a good frequency for checking in. This advising pairing doesn't come with any expectation or obligation for you to name me as a committee member of your comps or dissertation committee. Odds are, if the graduate program identified me to advise you, there is likely to be overlap in our intellectual interests, but you shouldn't feel that you're "locked in" to anything. If, over time, you come to feel that I am not meeting your needs as an advisor, I'd encourage you to approach me with this feedback at a meeting or in writing so that we can work to find a better way to work together. If you do not feel I am a good fit for advising you any longer, let's have a direct conversation so that I can help you to find a better fit with a different advisor.

Serving on one of your committees. If you are interested in me being a member of one of your committees, this involves a more intensive level of mentorship, and a commitment on your part to see a project through to completion at a high level of intellectual rigor. *You* should initiate that conversation as early as possible, optimally while you're still in the brainstorming or planning stages of a project. Through conversation, we will identify ways that I can help support your project goals in some capacity. The kinds of projects I am able and willing to take on is partially linked to my current commitments – there are only so many hours in a day, and if I am not able to give my 100% to your project as a committee member or chair, I will be frank with you about that. It also may be that as we talk, we discover that I'm not the best person to help mentor your project, in which case I'll be transparent about that and help you identify other alternatives. I treat each project as distinct – if you've asked me to be on your 1st comps committee, it does not obligate us to work together on your 2nd comps or dissertation committee. Similarly, if I have declined to serve on your 1st comps committee, I will still be open to serving on a subsequent committee of yours if you wish for me to do so.

Communication norms & expectations

a) **Meetings.** I expect advisees and mentees to come to meetings prepared to work in an organized fashion towards their goal. This starts with coming prepared to talk with a minimally-organized agenda circulated to me at least 24 hours in advance; I may add my own items to discuss or elaborate on what you've written. I also expect you to follow up on this agenda with your notes from what we discussed, and to-do/follow-up points for each of us. I often start a shared BOX folder for us to both use as a repository for files.

b) **Email.** This is one of the more perniciously ambiguous modes of communication that exists in modern society. A good rule of thumb is to use it for scheduling a time to talk, quick logistical updates, or talking out an idea that can be expressed in a couple of paragraphs. If it takes more than that to explain, call me on the phone (office: 413-545-7526) or let's talk it out in person. You should feel free to email on whatever schedule you work – I generally will respond early in the morning or during normal business hours within 24-48 hours, and usually don't respond on the weekend unless there's an unusual deadline or reason for me to be in the office. If you need a

quick answer, knock on my door and we can figure it out (if it's a small question) or a time to talk (if it's a bigger question).

c) **Texts, messaging, social media.** I sometimes use my cellphone for work-related purposes, including when I am off-campus for fieldwork; while traveling for conferences; and to work during my commute. It's not always in my pocket, and I'm not always able to respond to texts right away. If we're to be meeting somewhere other than my office, I'm happy to give out my mobile # in case we need to coordinate, but I'm generally not responsive to text messages outside that circumstance. I don't actively use social media.

2. Research training

It takes a village (to train a scientist). I hold the view that science is collaborative – very few of us do our work in isolation, sequestered away in a library, emerging having written a book or journal article, regardless of your epistemology or methods of inquiry. To this end, I feel it is important for the trainees working with me to meet with each other, for mutual accountability, problem-solving, and peer mentorship. Even if your projects have, on the surface level, very little overlap, there's a lot you can learn from each other. Twice per semester we will hold a group meeting at a time we can all make, and everyone will present updates on what they're working on. We may schedule additional meetings if, for instance, someone is preparing a talk for a conference and they'd like feedback. If you are not able and willing to prioritize contributing to this kind of collaborative training environment, I am unlikely to be a good mentoring fit for you.

Conducting research. I do not assume that every student is interested in pursuing a faculty or research position as a career, but I do believe in every student pursuing and executing a research project to a high level of quality. I also believe that every project you work on (comps project, dissertation) should be translated for an external audience outside of your committee in the form of a research article, systematic review, book chapter, op-ed, or similar. Graduate school may feel, at times, interminable, but the truth is that you're only here for a limited time, and you want the projects you've worked on to "count" in some way; publication is one way our field "counts". This involves starting with an idea, reviewing relevant literature, identifying any intellectual gaps, putting together an analysis plan that articulates specific and sequential action steps, identifying sources of intellectual support, choosing a proper methodology, and putting together a tractable timeline. If you do not feel that translating a project for an external audience aligns with your academic or career goals, we can discuss this and explore other avenues of academic/career growth for you.

Ethics and human subjects processes. An essential part of conducting social science research often involves performing the research in accordance with high ethical standards. In addition, federal laws guarantee certain rights and protections to research subjects. I am committed to training you do this research according to high ethical standards. Before beginning any research project, you will be required to take a number of training modules provided by the [UMass Research Administration & Compliance](#) division, familiarize yourself with how Human Subjects Approval process works on our campus, and if necessary, to submit your project for approval through the university. It is standard that a faculty member is listed as supervisor for graduate

student projects, and as such you need my sign-off (if I am listed as chair of a committee) before you submit it.

Publication norms. I am happy to discuss disciplinary norms about publication and communicating your work to broader audiences, about selecting the right venue for a given piece; to talk to you about how the publication process works; to share anonymous reviews I've received on any article or grant that I've written, and to strategize with you about how to respond to reviews you may receive. Know that in our line of work, manuscript rejection is far more frequent than acceptance. It's difficult to get harsh feedback, but fortune favors those who try again, and I expect you to.

Authorship norms. Our discipline distinguishes sole, lead-authorship, equal co-authorship, and ordered co-authorship; these have different meanings that we can discuss. Beyond this rough taxonomy, many journals also ask for individuals to explicitly identify how they contributed to a project. (For instance, [Elsevier](#) asks for authors to identify contributions to: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition.) For any publication you and I work on together (see below), we will have an explicit conversation about authorship and together we will come to an agreement on authorship designations that we both find appropriate to the situation and the publication.

Co-authorship opportunities. There are several circumstances that might be opportunities to work on a paper together. If you would like to work together on a paper, you should organize a 1-page proposal that outlines, (1) Title, who is to be involved, (2) Study motivation (background, research question, potential hypotheses to test), (3) Methods (data, variables, planned analyses), (4) Logistics (proposed timeline, target audience, possible journal), (5) Miscellaneous/Other concerns. You should think about, and propose, an authorship arrangement for us to discuss. Everyone needs to earn authorship, including me – if I feel that I am not able to contribute meaningfully, I will say so. Here are some common scenarios of how co-authorship might work:

Scenario 1: If you would like me to contribute to a manuscript derived from one of your comps or dissertation chapters after you defend it, I am happy to consider doing so if you ask; I have no expectation that you will do so, and I will not approach you to do so.

Scenario 2: If you are interested in writing a paper together on a topic outside your department requirements, organize a proposal and I am happy to entertain that possibility.

Scenario 3: If a funded project that I'm working on has hired you as a research assistant, you will likely have the opportunity to contribute to a paper related to that project. You also will have the latitude (given your workload outside the project) to propose a paper related to the project that you will lead, and which you may wish for my help contributing to.

Scenario 4: This is quite rare, but I may see that an unfunded project that I'm working on may be a good writing opportunity for *you* to be able to take the lead as a first-author, and I may say so. In the case that I identify an opportunity like this, know that you always have the ability to say no! I would only suggest it because I think it may suit your interests and career goals. You may decline this opportunity for any reason, without fear of repercussions in our work together.

Transparency and replicability. In all honesty, this was not as much a focus in my own Sociology graduate training, and partially reflects norms of the era in which I was training. However, transparency and replicability have become increasingly important in our field, as well as in working across disciplinary boundaries. As a result, I will be encouraging you to post whatever research materials you have produced (data collection instruments, data, code, etc.) publicly either in a widely-accessible repository, in a supplemental data appendix associated with a journal, or on your personal website.

3. Professional Development

Funding your research and writing grant proposals. When I advertise for an RA position to assist with a project, it is because I have spent a lot of time writing a grant proposal to support that training opportunity. I circulate it to the department and conduct interviews to find the best fit. If you have interest in such a position, you should apply, but for reasons of equity I need to make clear that my advisees and mentees do not automatically get priority. I will thus be encouraging you to be aggressive in seeking funding for your research as part of your graduate training. In any given academic year, we will discuss sources of external research funding (whether comps or dissertation). Learning how to write a persuasive proposal will allow you the freedom to do the kind of work that you believe in. I can help support your efforts in this regard with feedback on your ideas, as well as helping identify possible sources of support. For instance, during your first two years of graduate school, you are eligible to apply for NSF's highly competitive Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP), whose deadline is October of each year. Once you have identified a dissertation direction later in the program, you can apply for NSF Dissertation Award support. This is one source among dozens (even hundreds) of possible sources of support from foundations and government entities that we can work to identify together.

Scientific conferences. As you develop in the program, I will be encouraging you to begin submitting your work to our main disciplinary conferences such as ASA and ESS, but perhaps smaller disciplinary conferences such as IAPHS (if you're working on health disparities or determinants of health) or INSNA (if you're working on social network analysis). This involves a fair amount of thought and preparation to put together a successful submission, and giving presentations takes developing those skills as well. Throughout our program we try to prepare you in different ways to communicate your scientific ideas clearly and convincingly. One thing that I encourage of students who work with me is to put together a short-list of sessions you'd like to attend well ahead of time and organize your schedule ahead of time. As graduate students, you're also in an optimal position to reach out to experts in your subfield who may be attending; many of us are willing to meet for a coffee or in the lobby of whatever conference hotel we're at to answer questions from people who are interested in, or have overlap with, our work.

Letters of reference. I have a posted policy on letters on my website [here](#). In short, I am happy to write you a letter, but you need to be proactive in communicating to me the deadlines, why you're applying for it, how you think it articulates with your career goals, and most importantly, to give me a lot of lead time (at least a month – more is better). I will be forthright with you if I think that I cannot write you a strong letter, or if I think the opportunity may not be a great fit, and will promise to explain why.

4. Teaching pedagogy

Guest-lecturing opportunities. On the occasions when I am teaching a class that overlaps with the interests of a graduate student who is working with me, I may ask you if you are interested in giving a guest lecture. This is for the purposes of giving you some independent teaching experience and practice for the time when you teach your own class. The more cynical among us may think, “that sounds like he’s trying to get me to do his work for him!” But this would be an inaccurate assumption, because in fact, it will likely take me *more time than if I taught the class myself* to help you prepare to give that guest-lecture, to give you feedback on your well-constructed teaching plan for that day, to take notes while you teach the class, and to deliver to you feedback about how it went – your presence, style, delivery, connection with students, intellectual take-aways –after you’ve taught the class. I do this because I want you to be a well-rounded social scientist able to communicate your ideas in multiple settings. The classroom is one of our most important. As with any opportunity I propose to you, this is something you can decline or defer if it does not align with your goals. If you decline an invitation to give a guest lecture in one of my classes, it will have no negative impact on our work together.

Teaching observation & feedback. Should you be teaching your own class any given term, I will encourage you to schedule a MAP (Midterm assessment program) or observation through UMass’s Center for Teaching and Learning. I am also happy to attend a given session that you’d like me to observe, and give you feedback in the same spirit as mentioned above. I would request at least a month lead time to see if we can align our schedules. Each of you has your own voice and style, and I’ll be encouraging you to develop that. I can also give you feedback on course design when you learn you will be TO-ing your own class, if you would find it helpful. For reference, all of the syllabi for the classes that I’ve taught at UMass are on my website for you to look at for structure, style, grading schema, and so forth.

5. Expectations, Ownership, and Further Questions for Discussion

In sum, I expect *you* to take ownership of your education. You have primary responsibility for finishing your degree, and this means setting goals, deadlines, and striving to meet them. I expect you to show up on time and to be prepared for meetings, to cultivate a culture of self-reflection, as well as honesty about strengths and areas for growth. “I don’t know” is one of the most powerful phrases any of us can utter, especially if it’s followed by “but I’m willing to figure that out.”

From me, you should expect that I will be your biggest advocate; that I will challenge your ideas and challenge you to grow as a scholar; and that I will continue to mentor you after you leave campus, to the extent that you wish it. I will do everything in my power as an advisor or mentor to help you in attaining your goals. This requires directness, and building mutual respect on both of our parts. But most of all, it requires you to work hard, and to not give up when the going gets rough (and it will!). We all have good days and bad days, and sometimes these “days” last for weeks or months. I can only help you if you give me a chance to help you strategize to figure out a solution.

I have read Prof. Pachucki's "Mentorship Philosophy & Scientific Norms" handbook and commit to doing my best work possible, and striving to bring my best self to our professional relationship.

Name

Date

I have the following *follow-up questions/comments* about this handbook to discuss when we next meet:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I have the following *goals for the year* to discuss when we next meet:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I have the following *areas for growth* to discuss when we next meet:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.