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Dear UMass Sociology Graduate Students,

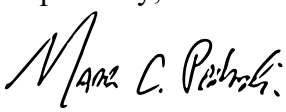
I have drafted this short handbook to give you a sense of what I do as a faculty mentor and how I can best support students who choose to train with me. *Equity and access in mentoring are critically important, and I strive to be consistent with all students I work with.* This is in keeping with our 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 facilitate developed by the *National Research Mentoring Network*. Yet in the social sciences we don't usually 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 STEM fields 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 "about" 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,



Mark C. Pachucki

Mentorship Philosophy & Scientific Norms

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v. 08/2025

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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, becoming acquainted with some of the "hidden curriculum" of graduate school, helping to provide you with professional development opportunities, and helping you to sharpen 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.

Mentorship philosophy

Working with early-career scholars is one of the most rewarding aspects of my job, and I see one of my primary roles as a faculty member as training the next generation of interdisciplinary social scientists on health disparity-related topics. As with all mentees that I mentor (whether junior faculty, post-doctoral fellow, graduate, or undergraduate), my main goal is to contribute to the continuing development of a highly independent, critically thinking, and theoretically and methodologically well-rounded scholar who, on one hand, can stand on their own two feet as a generalist scientist, but who has also delved deeply into multiple topical areas and combined them in creative ways. I train mentees in collaborative philosophies of science, wellness, best practices in research ethics, publication and authorship norms, transparency and replicability, and grant-writing. Together with my faculty colleagues, I am especially committed to helping mentor first generation and minority trainees. A parallel objective of mine is to provide an environment in which the mentee can thrive and conduct high-quality research with peers.

A note about some of my values as an educator and scientist: I'm not doing my job as a member of the scientific community and UMass faculty member if, day in and day out, I'm not actively helping students do their best work. If I'm not helping the quieter or silent voices to be heard, to be known, to be recognized, to be valued in the same ways as those who have a more visible presence, I shouldn't be in this job. I believe that recognizing diversity of thought and experience is what leads to a more just and equitable society, and also is what leads to progress in our collective work as scientists.

My research and teaching is largely concerned with investigating social relationships, culture, and social inequalities. These disparities take many forms – health, racial, socioeconomic, gender, sexual identity, and political ideology, among other forms. I condemn in the strongest possible terms hateful actions, words, and disparaging behavior of any type towards others.

Cultivating a culture of self-reflection about our work is important. I believe that we all make mistakes, and that mistakes can help us grow, but only if we own them – and this requires honesty about our strengths and weaknesses. I also believe in team-based science and contributing to a collaborative scientific community. This can mean many things, but to me it means being transparent about your workflow and analytic decisions, and it means being humble about what you know and what you don't know and being willing to reach out for help when you need it. It also means putting relationships first in working with others, even if it means the science takes longer.

I trained to do the work I do because I believe the only way forward in building an equitable and respectful community and society is by digging deeper — by running towards a problem, not away from it. I believe in conversation with those whom we disagree. If you're interested in working on any of this research with me, or want to talk about what we do in our shared enterprise as scientists and as fellow human beings, please reach out.

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, nor do I expect it. Similarly, if I have declined to serve on your 1st comps committee because of intellectual fit, 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 other items to discuss or elaborate on what you've written. If you have something for me to review/read, please give me a little bit more time than that. I also expect you to *follow up on this agenda with your notes* after the discussion, in terms of to-do/follow-up points for each of us. I often start a shared online folder as a repository for files.

b) Email. This is one of the more perniciously ambiguous modes of communication 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, let's use the phone (office: 413-545-7526) or talk it out in person. You should feel free

to email on whatever schedule *you work* – I generally will respond during normal business hours within 24-48 hours, but 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 set 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 use social media (BluSky) minimally for professional purposes to share my own research and amplify that of my colleagues, but I have a policy of not following students' accounts. Everyone is surveilled enough online as it is!

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. Typically, twice per year we will hold a group meeting at a time we can all make, and I ask folks to present updates on what they're working on. We may schedule other 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 environment, we are unlikely to be a good mentor/mentee fit.*

Wellness. I hold the belief that you need to take care of yourself – your whole person – to be able to do your best work. This means paying attention to your mental health and physical well-being, and this will look different for everyone. I also study social determinants of health and health disparities, so this topic is never far from my mind from a professional perspective. We're all complex individuals with different wellness needs and regimes. I consider myself someone who works hard when I'm at work, and rest hard in order to attend to other areas of my life when I'm not at work. It can be hard for those engaging in intellectual work to leave your brain at the office. Please know that I am not a scholar who expects you to be working 24/7 in order to "get ahead" – while there may be short-term rewards to do so, that route generally leads to rapid burnout. I may (occasionally) ask you what you're doing to take care of your whole self, which you may feel may verges on the personal. You're welcome to share as little or as much as you wish. From my end, know that this comes from a place of wanting you to succeed.

Conducting research. I do not start with an assumption 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.

We're in a department that has a rich tradition of public sociology – you can embrace that or not, but do know that there's support for you getting outside your subfield and reaching across boundaries.

Also, 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 and other forms of reporting our findings are ways our field "counts". This often 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. There are so many interesting career paths out there – some of them are in academia (ladder & non-ladder faculty, research), some of them are outside of academia (industry, government, non-profit sector, and beyond), and some are a mix of both. I want to help you develop skills that you can use to build whatever kind of career *you want* to have.

Ethics and human subjects. An essential part of conducting social science research involves performing the research in accordance with high ethical standards, often with human subjects. In addition, federal laws guarantee certain rights and protections to research subjects (there is also a distinction between research participants and research subjects to consider). 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. I don't treat ethics as a "hoop" to jump through, and nor should you. As a disclosure, it's always listed on my CV, but I'll mention here as well that I'm a member of our university's Institutional Review Board. Because of conflicts of interest, I am not assigned sociology colleagues' protocols to review, but know that I am happy to be a source of advice and can give guidance if you would find it useful.

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. I keep a folder of every manuscript, grant, and professional position that I've been rejected from. (It's a big file!) 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 *early* and *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 situations 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 are interested in writing a paper together outside your department requirements, organize a proposal like the above; I'm happy to entertain that possibility.

- Scenario 2: 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 3: This is quite rare, but I may see that an unfunded exploratory 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, and you have the time/interest to pursue it, 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.

- Scenario 4: If you would like me to contribute to a manuscript derived from one of your comps/dissertation chapters after you defend, I am happy to consider doing; I have no expectation that you will do so (my default is that you sole-author your dissertation chapters), and I will not approach you to do so. Given the substantial work you will have put in, if you were to ask me to contribute in a meaningful way ("gift authorships" are unethical and I do not endorse them), I would be a last author, signaling less credit than you deserve as the first/lead author), and I would see this as a time-limited arrangement.[1]

Transparency and replicability. This was not as much a focus in my own graduate training, and partially reflects norms of the era in which I was trained. However, transparency and replicability have become increasingly important in our field, as well as in working across disciplinary

[1] In this rare situation, I would ask you to submit said chapter for publication *at latest* < 6 months from your PhD. This is primarily to benefit you and your career trajectory, but in smaller part to also be respectful of my time. If I am in a position of needing to 'take over' a now-collaborative paper that you originated but then abandon or appreciably scale back effort on, we would then have a conversation about potentially revisiting authorship order.

boundaries. For those working on more quantitatively-oriented projects 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 (best), in a supplemental data appendix associated with a journal (better), or on your personal website (good). This holds for qualitative scholars as well (e.g. interview schedules, de-identified interview transcripts when possible). I will strongly discourage you from any variation of "code and analyses available from author upon request"

Last, we should have a frank conversation about the place that generative AI has in your research training. I don't use genAI for my own work, but my job is to help support you and provide you with tools to be successful. My core stance is that I'm interested in reading *your* thoughts, not those of a machine that's executing an interactive billion-step regression on a corpus of text. I'm interested in you developing habits of mind to think carefully about a problem and make connections yourself. One can argue that genAI can aid in this effort. However, different flavors of genAI currently have a variety of flaws, including hallucinations and vast amounts of power and environmental impact from the server farms that power them. There may be some edge cases around the margins where I acknowledge that genAI may be helpful in augmenting your original thinking, but there are complex issues of potential attribution, plagiarism, and more at stake to consider. Let's talk about this to clarify what makes sense in your particular case. And in *all cases* I will be unwavering in mandating complete transparency in any of your work about whether, and how genAI was used, whether in a grad program requirement (comps, dissertation) or published work that emerges. Be aware that its use may limit where (or if) you publish it according to different publishers' guidelines.

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 PAA or IAPHS (if you're working on health disparities,

social determinants of health, or social demography) 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.

Deadlines for abstract/paper submission:

- ASA: typically late Jan/early Feb for August conference
- IAPHS: typically March-April, for October conference
- PAA: typically September/October, for April/May conference
- ESS: typically December, for Feb-March conference
- INSNA: typically Dec-Jan, for June-July conference

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 three weeks – more lead time 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 I will promise to explain why.

4. Teaching pedagogy

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.

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 either as a mentee or as a TA, 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. Some may cynically think, "that sounds like he's trying to get me to do his work for him!" But this would be inaccurate, 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, interaction 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 among them. As with any opportunity I propose, this is something you can decline or defer if it does not align with your goals. It also gives me something to add to my letters of recommendation for you, which can be useful for certain types of opportunities. Again, this is for *your benefit* – if you decline an invitation to give a guest lecture in one of my classes, it will not have a negative impact on our work together.

5. Expectations, Ownership, and Further Questions for Discussion

In sum, I expect *you* to take ownership of your education and training. 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, not just telling you what you want to hear; and that I will continue to mentor you after you leave campus to the extent that you wish it. (For many people, their first position after grad school is a transition that our corner of academia normalizes as a concrete separation from one's graduate faculty in order to 'demonstrate independence'; for this and other reasons you may 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 help you best if you give me a chance to help you strategize to figure out a solution.

Mentor/Mentee Agreement

I have read this "Mentorship Philosophy & Scientific Norms" handbook and commit to doing my best work possible, and will strive 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 first 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.

Annual Check-in (to add to our yearly September meeting agenda)

I have the following *goals for this year*:

1.

2.

3.

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

1.

2.

3.

Other: