Building Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity into

Graduate Student Coauthorship

Reyna L. Reyes-Núñez *University of Nebraska at Omaha, USA*

Felipe Blanco, *University of Nebraska at Omaha, USA*

Jodi Benenson, *University of Nebraska at Omaha, USA*

Juve J. Cortés-Rivera, *Pablo De Olavide University, Spain*

Barbara Gomez-Aguinaga, *University of Nebraska at Omaha, USA*

Nuri Heckler, *University of Nebraska at Omaha, USA*

Thomas Jamieson, *University of Nebraska at Omaha, USA*

Njoki Mwarumba *University of Nebraska at Omaha, USA*

As coauthorship becomes more common (Metz and Jäckle 2017), some faculty members believe it can be leveraged to promote a more inclusive academy. By actively promoting mutual respect, workload balance, equity, and diversity, coauthorship can benefit graduate students from underrepresented backgrounds who often bring distinctive perspectives, experiences, and theories to the study of politics and government. In addition, as pressure on graduate students to publish continues to increase (Landgrave 2019), coauthoring can expose students to the "hidden curriculum" as they benefit from professional development and publish peer-reviewed research,

thereby improving their academic job prospects and chances for continued success (Hilmer and Hilmer 2012).

Coauthoring, a form of research collaboration between two or more parties to mutually learn from each other and work to create a research project (Ponomariov and Boardman 2016), is tempered by many challenges when done with graduate students. It is important to consider power imbalances and avoid extractive models of publishing where students do not receive sufficient credit for their work. Institutions may also have structural incentives that discourage collaboration between faculty members and students, and there are important opportunity costs for working with professors if doing so comes at the expense of students' solo-authored projects (Maher et al. 2013; Malsch and Tessier 2015). These incentives are built into academic career pathways via centuries of processes developed by mostly white men, many which were deliberately placed in universities to exclude women and people with insufficient European ancestry (Grosfoguel 2013). Coauthorship may mitigate these inequitable structures so long as those faculty members, students, reviewers, and editors continually reflect on how the processes may or may not incentivize equity.

In this article we draw on political science literature on collaboration to argue that coauthoring between faculty members and graduate students can help advance commitments to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI). Our primary goal is to formulate recommendations for productive and equitable coauthorship for faculty members, students, departments, and journals looking to support equity, diversity, and representation in academia. We argue that coauthorship may mitigate structural hurdles for underrepresented scholars in a university system that still displays inequities in race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and national origin.

BENEFITS OF COAUTHORSHIP

Successful publication is critical for entry into and then advancement in the academic job market (Landgrave 2019). Coauthoring with graduate students from underrepresented backgrounds may promote JEDI by providing students with invaluable experience in (1) developing healthy work relationships, (2) navigating the publication regime, and (3) understanding and responding to journal decisions (Feldon et al. 2016; Maher et al. 2013; Mendoza-Denton et al. 2017). Learning this "hidden curriculum" is indispensable for success in the academy but, in our experience, attracts relatively little attention in graduate training and is something that mentoring alone cannot necessarily provide. In contrast, coauthoring provides an opportunity for graduate students to learn about the publication process: developing and publishing a paper can lead to insights that might not be evident when learning about publishing in a more abstract way.

The decision to coauthor usually begins with a mutual interest in a topic, but in deciding to collaborate, there should be an explicit discussion as to why both parties wish to work together, what each can contribute, and what each aims to accomplish. Coauthorship may begin at multiple stages of a research project—from the conceptualization stage to the data analysis stage—and it is the professors' responsibility to approach the project in a way that teaches students how to divide the workload equitably and communicate effectively (Freeman and Huang 2015; Mendoza-Denton et al. 2017). Regular meetings to discuss the project and any problems or qualms can provide students with space to learn strategies for successful publication and collaboration that they can then bring with them in their careers. By laying the foundation of a healthy coauthorship relationship, faculty members can give students firsthand experience with

productive collaboration. For example, we have found that discussing author order at the beginning of a project alleviates later tension and builds a healthy habit for students.

Submission provides another opportunity to teach the "hidden curriculum." Publishing requires crafting projects that meet the aims and goals of journals while developing knowledge. This process engages graduate students in learning about different types of journals, their rankings and reputation, their focus and aims, and the peer review process (Hilmer and Hilmer 2012). Understanding these elements early in careers is important, but it does require direction from the professor. Even submitting a manuscript is a learning opportunity so long as the professor takes an active role in guiding students through the process either by submitting the manuscript to the journal themselves and sharing each step of the process or by actively participating in each stage of the submission process with the student. In addition, meeting with student coauthors, discussing how to respond to reviewer comments, and writing cover letters are learning opportunities that cannot be replicated in the classroom.

Finally, journal decisions provide another opportunity for graduate students to learn about the process. Decisions—particularly rejections—can cause significant stress (Horn 2016). However, a journal rejection can be a valuable experience for students, and the support of a professor during this time is invaluable for helping them internalize that a journal's decision is not a reflection on themselves as scholars. Rather, it is an opportunity to improve. Despite setbacks, the professor can show how the healthy division of labor must continue. Once a paper is accepted, the professor can help the student by sharing their network in the process of dissemination.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Identities, roles, and backgrounds of contributors play an important role in the coauthoring process (Freeman and Huang 2015; Mendoza-Denton et al. 2017). Issues may arise when power imbalances exist in collaborative projects not only from the position of the graduate student or faculty member but also from characteristics like gender, race/ethnicity, cultural background, language/literacy, religious beliefs, national origin, or ability. Professors and students might find it burdensome and lack incentives to engage in coauthoring, especially when their backgrounds are dissimilar.

In terms of race and ethnicity, diversity plays a significant role in developing a symbiotic relationship between student and professor (Taylor et al. 2010). Research shows that doctoral students from underrepresented groups may place greater importance on there being a diversity of faculty members, students, and communities, as well as facilities' quality, cost of living, childcare, housing, and urbanity than other students (Bersola et al. 2014). International graduate students may also face special challenges on adapting to life in the United States. Taken-for-granted notions in the United States, such as around race and the social implications of the racialization processes (Omi and Winant 2014; Mendoza-Denton, et al. 2017), may be better understood and navigated by international students through the collaborative process of coauthorship with diverse faculty members.

Students face additional challenges during the coauthorship process from the initial idea-generation phase to the publication phase. Drawing from our own experiences, these issues could include the following:

- Students with ideas outside the mainstream might refrain from sharing their thoughts.
- Experiences, religious beliefs, and cultural norms can create barriers in professional relationships between collaborators of different genders or sexual orientations.

- Impostor syndrome and other similar beliefs can prevent the student from taking the lead, contributing, or claiming appropriate credit in projects with professors.

- Financial struggles might limit students' time and energy to invest in projects beyond coursework that would be beneficial to their professional careers.

- Students with functional disabilities or neurodiverse students might need more time and patience to complete a project, yet time can be critical in faculty career considerations.

Although these issues are not easily resolved, we recommend that faculty members are reflexive throughout the coauthoring process, paying close attention to students' needs and prioritizing their welfare (Becker, Graham, and Zvobgo 2021; Feldon et al. 2016). For example, while focusing on coauthoring with undergraduates, Davis (2013) presents a successful case of meeting student–professor goals in which coauthoring is part of a more comprehensive learning process and faculty members and students alike receive benefits when their needs are acknowledged and addressed. This may be even more important in the context of graduate education, where the expectation to publish is usually stronger for both students and faculty members.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENT COAUTHORSHIP

We provide some recommendations about how to best ensure mutually beneficial coauthorship that promotes JEDI in academia. They reflect our experiences as students and faculty members involved in both productive and challenging collaborations.

First, we recommend adopting inclusive practices in recruiting coauthors. Underrepresented and first-generation students are often less likely to approach faculty members about collaborating, so it is important that faculty members are proactive in encouraging students to think about coauthoring and widely advertise opportunities at their institution (Becker,

Graham, and Zvobgo 2021). Students cannot express interest in collaborative opportunities they do not know about.

Second, we recommend that faculty members are cognizant of the power dynamics in their relationship with graduate student coauthors (Behl 2020) and that they take steps to acquire knowledge on how to support coauthoring, encourage students to share ideas, and ask questions along the way. Faculty members should treat student coauthors as equal participants by using collaboration as an opportunity to mentor students in scholarly publishing while recognizing that underrepresented students bring with them diverse perspectives, thereby improving scholarship.

Implied in the work needed to acknowledge power dynamics is our third recommendation that graduate students should receive benefits from coauthoring. Unfortunately, there is no shortage of stories about exploitive relationships between faculty members and students, in which students receive little credit for their work. Although the specific details of the collaboration vary, we suggest that at a minimum, students should receive the following: (1) credit as named coauthors in any publications, and the order of names should be proportional to the work done; (2) fair division of tasks on the project, in which students should be involved in all phases of the project and not just the more menial tasks; and (3) payment for their time whenever possible. In addition, asking students about their interest in the project and stepping back or coaching them through the parts of the research from which they have the most to gain can improve the return on their investment in time and energy that could be distracting them from their progress in their graduate studies.

Fourth, we suggest pursuing novel projects that build on the knowledge, expertise, and strengths of all collaborators. If the project is too closely related to a senior scholar's previous work, it is possible the student coauthor will not be perceived as making a meaningful

contribution. We broadly recommend that author order reflects the amount of work (e.g., effort, labor, time) committed to the project; if the faculty member plays a more back-seat coaching role in writing the paper, the graduate student should be made first author. At the same time, if the project draws directly from the student's dissertation, the student might be better served to pursue single-authored publications because search committees may assign greater value to these articles. To avoid both pitfalls, we recommend pursuing projects that draw on all authors' existing research agendas to produce a novel project.

Fifth, we recommend that collaborative projects are prioritized by faculty members so that articles are published or forthcoming by the time the graduate student is applying for positions in the academic job market. In practice, this means starting papers early in a student's graduate training. We also suggest using strict deadlines for each element of the paper to maintain progress that will enable submitting the paper for review before students enter the job market.

Finally, a focus on individual-level change alleviates some harm but fails to address institutional inequities. The recommendations provided here cannot guarantee that students will be judged on merit, rather than their conformity to historical power (Grosfoguel 2013; Omi and Winant 2014). Without keeping one eye on the realities of systemic inequity, incentives are likely to evolve in ways that maintain existing power rather than align with the hopes of advocates for equity. For example, research indicates that untenured faculty members of color often hold unconventional research agendas because they carry the additional burden of supporting students of color (Freeman and Huang 2015), and promotion policies that overvalue solo authoring in mainstream journals could sabotage these scholars' efforts. Universities and

journals must make institutional changes to support scholars willing to use coauthoring to advance equity,.

First, universities can train junior faculty members on best practices for collaboration, particularly those related to working with graduate students. Training in these best practices is invaluable for newer faculty members while likely increasing the efficacy of collaborative projects. Topics covered could include items like project management, time management, communication, building and maintaining professional relationships, promoting diverse perspectives, editing collaborative work, and fostering respectful and inclusive team environments.

Second, professional incentives can be put in place at institutions to reward collaborations with students. At some institutions, solo-authored publications are given greater weight in retention, promotion, and tenure review, which discourages tenure-track faculty members from engaging in collaborations. Such barriers could result in lost opportunities for mutually beneficial collaborative projects. In one example of a positive change, the School of Public Administration at the University of Nebraska at Omaha recently revised tenure and promotion guidelines to better reward coauthored scholarship and incentivize collaboration. Further, institutions could support mutually beneficial coauthorship by funding graduate students sufficiently so they do not need to work elsewhere to support themselves and so risk missing out on coauthoring opportunities.

Finally, leading academic journals could adopt models of publishing that especially encourage coauthorship with students: these could function similarly to how several journals encourage reregistration or through the explicit encouragement of submissions from early-career

scholars. If coauthored work with students meets the submission guidelines, these models could be especially helpful in encouraging coauthorship with graduate students.

DISCUSSION

Coauthorship is an important pedagogical process that can contribute to improved JEDI outcomes in political science and in academia more broadly. Faculty members can help teach graduate students the "hidden curriculum" through coauthoring, including how to transform an idea into a manuscript, how to navigate the peer review process, and how to publish their work. Ultimately, successful coauthorships can yield publications that help graduate students from underrepresented groups succeed in the academic job market.

However, like many aspects of academic life, coauthorship has often involved extracting labor from graduate students, who then repeat these processes with their own students as faculty members. To break this cycle, it is vital that faculty members enter coauthoring relationships with a clear understanding of the challenges of collaboration, that they take conscious steps to treat student coauthors as equal partners, and that they ensure that the students benefit from the project. While systemic power structures continue to promote inequities in race, ethnicity, gender, national origin and other identities, faculty coauthors can mitigate these harms by adopting a few simple recommendations in their collaborations, thereby supporting JEDI in academia.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

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