Lab philosophy and responsibilities

Introduction

All lab members are expected to read this page in full, then complete the quiz and acknowledgement linked at the bottom. This page will evolve over time to address concerns from members of the lab or the broader research community. I have borrowed some of these guidelines from other sources: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

Lab philosophy

The lab has two primary goals:

1. Training graduate students, postdocs, and research assistants to have successful and fulfilling research careers.
2. Publishing work that has a long-lasting impact on the field of cognitive neuroscience.

Both of these goals are highly overlapping and complementary, and require:

- brainstorming creative new theories and models in a psychologically safe environment
- doing work that we are proud of and excited about
- using careful experimental and analysis techniques that follow and improve upon best practices in the field
- building skills for communicating research through papers, presentations, visualizations, and social media
- fostering a culture of respect, support, openness, and healthy work-life balance

Chris's responsibilities

- Setting the overall research direction for the lab, and helping in the conception and design of new research projects.
- Ensuring that all lab members are financially supported, including stipend, travel to present at 1-2 conferences a year, and funding for experiments.
- Meeting regularly with all lab members, both in groups and one-on-one, to discuss current projects or longer-term questions of research planning and career advice. Meetings will be kept as short as possible, to be respectful of everyone's time.

- Responding to emails and providing feedback on paper drafts in a timely manner. In general I strive to respond to emails within 24 hours, and to provide manuscript revisions within 10 days.
- Ensuring that all lab members are abiding by the code of conduct described below, and resolving any conflicts within the lab.
- Advertising lab members to the field by introducing them to potential collaborators, promoting their work at conferences, and writing letters of recommendation.

Lab member responsibilities

- Working for approximately 40 hours per week (unless you are a part-time/volunteer RA). You are not typically expected to work on nights and weekends, though you are free to shift your hours off of the traditional 9-5 if that is your preference. You are not expected to be responsive to email outside of your working hours. In general, all lab members should try to be physically in the lab in the middle of the day (~11-3) to facilitate interaction (with exceptions for classes, data collection etc.). During limited crunch periods (e.g. before a conference or University deadline) we may need to work additional hours, but you should be given advance notice of when this is a possibility. During the summer, PhD students and postdocs can take a total of 2-3 weeks off without advance approval by Chris (though please send an email with the dates you will be away); other lab members should clear extended vacation time with Chris. Spending your summer at another lab or at an internship is also an option that can be discussed with Chris.
- Attending all scheduled lab meetings and meetings with Chris, and coming prepared (e.g. having read information sent out ahead of time, having relevant data properly organized, and having written down questions to ask). During meetings, you should be engaged and attentive, to help keep meetings short and productive.
- Caring for your own physical and mental health. In particular, mental health issues are extremely common in academia. You should ensure that you take time to develop interests and support networks outside of work, and familiarize yourself with symptoms of disorders such as depression and anxiety. If your mental health is declining, seek help from Chris or a professional therapist. Many faculty members, including Chris, have found therapy helpful during their academic careers. All PhD students are encouraged to take time off at some point during their PhD when they need to take a break.
- Prioritizing your time spent on research. Although your administrative and teaching responsibilities are important, blocking out time on your calendar for research is a good way to ensure that you are making progress toward your research goals. Time management is a critical skill in academic research, and you should experiment with approaches such as the Pomodoro Technique for maintaining attention on long tasks.

- Being supportive of your labmates. This includes sharing knowledge, attending practice talks, giving constructive criticism, helping to run experiments, and promoting each other's work in conversations/presentations to others in the field.
- Meeting regularly with Chris to discuss your progress, and keeping Chris in the loop about your career goals. Although a tenure-track position can be a great match for some people, most science PhDs will not go on to academic careers, and so it is important to be actively thinking about and investigating careers that you will find exciting and fulfilling.
- The specific responsibilities for the Lab Manager are described here - all lab members should familiarize themselves with what is expected of the lab manager, so that they know what tasks they should be responsible for on their own vs. should be delegated to the lab manager.
- Following the code of conduct outlined below, and bringing concerns you have experienced or observed to Chris's attention.

Lab code of conduct

Academic misconduct

Falsification or plagiarism of research results or manuscripts is a serious offense that can potentially end the research careers of both the perpetrator **and** their innocent labmates and collaborators. Science is built on a foundation of trust and mutual respect, and there is no situation in which it is acceptable to knowingly breach that trust.

Lab members have an obligation to the lab to honestly report the results of their experiments, and to be up front about accidental mistakes that caused data corruption or loss. Although of course we should strive to minimize errors through careful testing and attention to our work, no one is perfect. In graduate school, Chris once messed up a recording session that his PI had spent weeks coordinating. Attempting to cover up poor results or mistakes through dishonesty or fabrication is grounds for immediate removal from the lab.

Human subjects research

All lab members must be rigorously adhere to safety guidelines and IRB protocols when running experiments with human subjects. In particular, careless use of MRI machines can have tragic consequences, and even minor accidents can lead to the shutdown of all experiments in the lab. We have an obligation to our study volunteers to keep them safe and comfortable, and ensure that their confidential data is kept private among only those approved on our IRB protocol. If at any point there is a negative outcome for a subject (e.g., a subject becomes ill or upset, there is a breach of confidentiality, etc), you should immediately seek assistance from Chris or a lab manager, and notify Chris as soon as possible (we may need to report this information to the IRB and/or our funding agencies).

Harassment

Harassment includes offensive verbal comments related to gender, gender identity and expression, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, religion, sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of talks or other events, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention. Please read the University's policies on discrimination and harassment. Harassment is absolutely not tolerated and is grounds for removal from the lab.

If you experience or observe harassment by a lab member or by another member of the University community, please contact Chris immediately. If Chris is the cause of your concern and you do not feel comfortable contacting him, you should reach out to the department chair or a trusted faculty member. Note that University policy requires that if any faculty member (such as Chris) becomes aware of sexual harassment or abuse involving students or employees, we are legally required to report it to the Title IX Sexual Harassment Response Coordinator (though the reporting student is not required to participate in the investigation if they choose not to). A full list of reporting options, including confidential options, can be found on the Columbia Sexual Respect website.

Implicit bias and discrimination

Aside from explicit harassment, there are more subtle patterns of behavior that can hinder the success of people belonging to traditionally underrepresented groups in science. Academic research has historically excluded many scientists due to factors including race, gender, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, and disability. The DPM lab strives to create a working environment in which all lab members' perspectives and voices are valued. We are proud of the inclusive community we have built within the lab, but also recognize that correcting systemic inequalities requires ongoing and active work to make our field more equitable and welcoming for all people.

Lab members should strive to not only be mindful of their own behavior, but to serve as role models for improving behavior throughout the University and scientific community. If you observe lab members (including Chris) engaging in behavior that is unfair or exclusionary, you are encouraged to communicate your concerns to them (either in the moment or afterwards) in person or over email. If you are on the receiving end of these concerns, you should listen without being defensive, and ensure that you are sensitive to their concerns moving forward. Most people in academia do value diversity and equality, and will be receptive to comments about unintended negative impacts of their actions - if you do not feel comfortable contacting someone directly, please contact Chris (or another faculty member, or the University support system if necessary).

One salient form of bias in scientific research is gender bias, which is a primary contributor to the under-representation of women in leadership roles in both academia and industry. An excellent introduction to the typical ways in which this bias can manifest is the VIDS series of short videos, which are all based on real interviews with scientists in academia who have encountered situations like these. **All lab members should watch all the narrative videos (~30 minutes in total) when joining the lab.**

Another systemic inequality within academic research is discrimination against people of color, especially black scientists, who make up only 6% of University faculty (vs. 76% white). This bias manifests in many forms, including systemic issues in the way that the scientists are recruited and trained as well as the way that researchers from minority groups are treated in day-to-day interactions. **Please read this document from the Growing Up in Science workshop summarizing common ways that people of color are marginalized in scientific spaces, and concrete ways to be an anti-racist ally.**

Quiz and acknowledgment

After reading through this whole page, please complete and sign this quiz.