

Co-authoring & Collaboration

Building Interdisciplinary Collaborations & Co-authoring Strategies

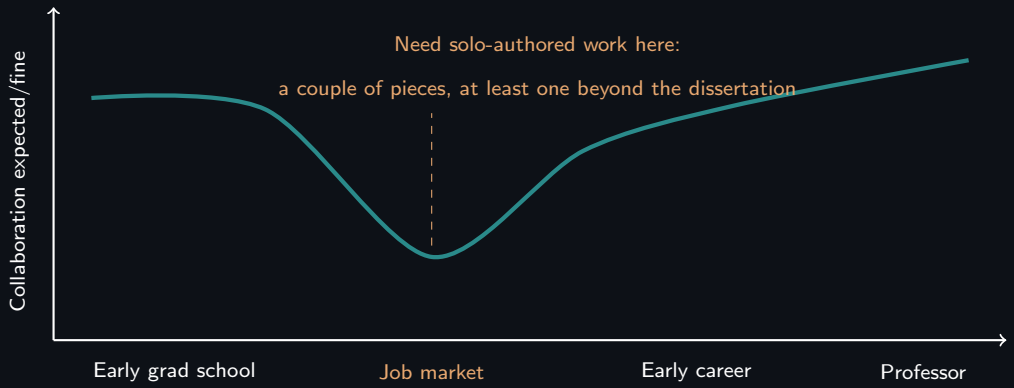
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Women in Comparative and International Politics (WICIP)

The Big Picture: Solo vs. Co-authored Work

The Career Curve



- Early on: collaborating is good, normal, and expected
- Job market: committees want proof of independence (solo work, not all dissertation-based)

Finding Co-authors

Types of Co-authors

- Senior faculty: more mentorship experience, but less need to publish (your timeline may not be their timeline)
- Junior faculty: more keen, understand the current climate better, often stronger on newer methods
- Other grad students: great option, especially outside your department (complementary skills, no internal competition)

Conferences & Networking

- Section meetings, panels, and receptionss at major conferences (APSA, ISA, MPSA)
- Provide good questions and comments at panels, then follow up afterwards
- Multi-Day Workshops: EITM, pre-conference workshops, summer schools
- networking = future co-authorship

Look Across Schools

- Collaborators don't have to be political scientists: statistics, economics, geography, computer science, environmental science...
- Complementary interests across disciplines make for stronger papers (and broader outlets)
- It's completely fine to ask faculty in other departments if they have students with similar interests
- Faculty are usually happy to make the introduction

Cold Emailing: An Option, With a Catch

- Cold emailing can work, but usually only when you already have a stronger developed idea or preliminary results
- "Want to collaborate sometime?" rarely lands. "Here's a puzzle, here's what I've found so far, here's why you're the right fit" does.
- Reference their actual work, make a concrete ask, and make it easy to say no

Authorship: From RA to First Author

Authorship Is Tricky (and Very Norms-Based)

- There is no universal rule. Authorship is deeply norms-based.
- Norms differ across places, institutions, countries, disciplines, and methods
- Some senior scholars will be first author no matter what, without question, and will never be second
- In very bad instances: some senior scholars have RAs write papers and won't even let them be a co-author. This may be something to escalate.

The Progression

1. RA stage: make the most of RAships and do great work, mostly on the data side
2. Methods stage: progress to showing your methods chops on projects
3. First-author stage: bring a thoughtful empirical idea of your own and take responsibility for the project

Each stage builds trust. Co-authorship is earned through demonstrated reliability.

Stage 1: Making the Most of RAships

- Treat the data work seriously: cleaning, merging, documentation
- Reliable, careful, well-documented work gets you invited back
- Ask questions about the why, not just the task. It signals you're thinking like a scholar.
- RAships are auditions. Faculty remember who delivered.

Stages 2 & 3: Methods, Then Ideas

Show your methods chops:

- Take ownership of the analysis, not just the data prep
- Suggest improvements: robustness checks, alternative specifications, better measures

Move to first author:

- Bring a thoughtful empirical idea of your own to the table
- Take responsibility: framing, timeline, submission, revisions
- Your co-authors become advisors on your project. That's the shift.

The Normal Progression in Practice

- Second author while you learn the ropes
- Build trust with your more senior co-author over time
- Then move into more responsibility (and eventually first authorship)

Making Collaboration Work

Working Together: Set It Up Well

1. Establish a timeline with your co-author (internal deadlines, check-ins, conference deadlines)
2. Make roles clear so the work is fairly distributed (particularly with other grad-students)
3. Write author contribution statements. Many journals require them anyway, and they keep credit honest.
4. Talk about the target journal early. It settles framing, length, and expectations.

Workflow & Tools

- Writing: Overleaf (shared LaTeX, version history, comments)
- Project management: Trello, Notion (tasks, deadlines, who-owns-what)
- Citation management: Zotero or similar with a shared library.
- Keep decisions and working notes written down somewhere findable.

Collaborating Across Methods

- Collaborating across methods (qual + quant, formal + empirical, computational + field work) can be very, very good
- Each method covers the other's blind spots, and mixed-method papers can reach broader outlets
- But it can also be difficult: different standards of evidence, different timelines, different ideas of what the "main" contribution is
- Talk through expectations early (along with journal fit)

Discussion

Questions & Further Chat

Happy to answer any questions, or have a further chat about:

- When to (and when not to) cold email, and how prepared to be
- How to balance collaboration alongside dissertation writing
- Pros and cons of collaborating with different levels and types of people (senior faculty, junior faculty, peers, across fields)