

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION  
The University of Michigan  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Joshua M. Ackerman, assistant professor of psychology, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of psychology, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2007	Arizona State University
M.A.	2003	Arizona State University
B.A.	1998	Duke University

Professional Record:

2014 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Michigan
2014 – present	Faculty Associate, Research Center for Group Dynamics, University of Michigan
2014	Associate Professor, Sloan School of Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
2009 – 2014	Assistant Professor, Sloan School of Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
2007 – 2009	Post-doctoral Associate, Yale University

Summary of Evaluation

Teaching – Professor Ackerman’s teaching fills a crucial need in evolutionary social psychology. He is an outstanding instructor who has taught large lecture courses and small seminars since his arrival in 2014. Student evaluations for his large undergraduate lecture class, “Evolutionary Social Psychology,” are exceptional. He also teaches two graduate seminars, “Advanced Social Psychology” and “Evolutionary Psychology.” Once again, his student evaluations have been outstanding. Professor Ackerman is a generous, enthusiastic, and engaged mentor, who currently advises two Ph.D. students and works with two others. He also regularly supervises eight to ten undergraduate research assistants.

Research – Professor Ackerman investigates psychological mechanisms that evolved to respond to threat. He draws inspiration from evolutionary theory to develop specific social psychological theories and then tests the predictions of those theories empirically. This approach has led to novel and important results relating to how people respond to disease threat, interpersonal threat, and threat related to mating and romantic relationships. Professor Ackerman has 39 publications in a range of outlets, including some in the most highly regarded publications in his field, and he has a large number of papers under review. His research on the behavioral immune system is supported by funding from the National Science Foundation.

Recent and Significant Publications:

“Going all-in: Unfavorable sex ratios attenuate choice diversification,” with J. K. Maner and S. M. Carpenter, *Psychological Science*, 27, 2016, pp. 799-809.

“Superman to the rescue: Simulating physical invulnerability attenuates exclusion-related interpersonal biases,” with J. Y. Huang and J. A. Bargh, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 49, 2013, pp. 349-354.

“Let’s get serious: Communicating commitment in romantic relationships,” with V. Griskevicius and N. P. Li, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100, 2011, pp. 1079-1094.

“Incidental haptic sensations influence social judgments and decisions,” with C. C. Nocera and J. A. Bargh, *Science*, 328, 2010, pp. 1712-1715.

Service – Professor Ackerman has served in many capacities in the department and to the wider community. Internally, he has served on the Student Academic Advising Committee and twice served on the Admissions Committee for the Social Psychology area. Most notably he is currently serving on the Psychology Executive Committee. Externally, Professor Ackerman serves on the editorial boards of the two top journals in his field. He has also been invited to review grant applications for the National Science Foundation and numerous manuscripts for top journals.

#### External Reviewers:

##### Reviewer (A)

“Josh’s strength is in applying his theoretical approaches to understanding many different substantive domains -- moving research in each of those domains forward in ways about which researchers primarily associated with just one substantive area of research would not have thought. I am happy to write this letter in strong support for his promotion and tenure.”

##### Reviewer (B)

“What I most appreciate about Dr. Ackerman is his entrepreneurial approach to research. ... His research continually expands into new areas. With each new study he demonstrates that an evolutionary-functional perspective can open up new areas of research, leading one to look for and find features of the human mind that would never otherwise be discovered. What you have in Joshua Ackerman is a creative, original, talented, productive scientist of exceptional breadth.”

##### Reviewer (C)

“Based on his publication record and my assessment of the importance and rigor of his research, I would estimate that Dr. Ackerman is in the top 5% of his peer group in social cognition.”

##### Reviewer (D)

“Josh is one of very few scholars in our cohort who is consistently at the forefront of innovation and novel discoveries. His work has contributed significantly to the recent leap forward in evolutionary social psychology—the largest advancement in knowledge creation the field has seen since its inception some 30 years ago. ... He’s poised to join the elite circle of leaders in our field.”

##### Reviewer (E)

“...Dr. Ackerman’s work to date has had substantial impact. He’s published in high quality journals. ...his work is smart and rooted in solid theoretical foundations. I suspect he has excellent, high-impact work in the pipeline. I think he’ll contribute importantly to the field throughout his career.”

Reviewer (F)

“Josh Ackerman is among the most visible evolutionary psychologist working in social psychology and enjoys an excellent reputation. This is also confirmed by his appointment to the editorial boards of the two leading journals, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* and *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*.”

Reviewer (G)

“...Dr. Ackerman has established himself as a rising leader in the study of the ways people deal with evolutionarily-important challenges and their modern-day counterparts. His impressive work is wide-ranging yet interconnected, impactful, and of interest and import to researchers and the broader public alike. I am confident that he would be promoted with tenure [at my institution]...where his interdisciplinary connections to evolutionary theory, marketing, and public health would be highly valued.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Ackerman has made important contributions in research, teaching, and service. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Joshua M. Ackerman be promoted to the rank of associate professor of psychology, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



---

Andrew D. Martin, Dean  
Professor of Political Science and Statistics  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

May 2017