

**DISSERTATION COMMITTEES, ACADEMIC YEAR 2017-18:
CURRENTLY ENROLLED STUDENTS WHO ARE ABD
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF CA, DAVIS
*All faculty are from UC Davis unless otherwise noted***

Name: Kristin McCarty

Dissertation Title: “How Legal Do We Want to Get With It?” Legal Consciousness and the Family-Building Behaviors of Polyamorists”

Committee Chair: Diane Wolf

Committee Members: Ryken Grattet,
Rana Jaleel

Abstract:

Scholars of marriage and family recognize the changing social importance of family relationships in contemporary American society. Due to the acceleration of these changes in the second half of the 20th century, the meanings and boundaries of “family” are being called into question now more than ever. Much of the discussion derives from a monogamous perspective, that is, either a man and a woman, or a gay or lesbian couple. This framework does not include another family form gaining popularity, which is that of the polyamorous family. How do polyamorists—who may be involved in two or more simultaneous, romantic relationships—approach family-building? Furthermore, to what extent do legal ideas and structures impact these families? This research uses a feminist theoretical perspective to examine the family building beliefs and behaviors of polyamorists in the United States. To understand how polyamorous families experience interactions with socio-legal institutions and how they may or may not resist or implement legal ideas, I will also examine the role of legal consciousness. This research will contribute to the sociology of family and legal consciousness by expanding our understanding of how non-traditional families are created and how they utilize but are also constrained by the law. Furthermore, this research will continue the work of socio-legal scholars to underscore the ways that legal ideas and discourse shape the behaviors of marginalized populations, which has implications for the nature of legal consciousness and the way we understand the reproduction of law's legitimacy and power.

Name: Emily Breuninger

Dissertation Title: “Welcome to the Agrihood”: an assessment of resident behaviors and attitudes in two sustainability-focused master planned communities”

Committee Chair: Bruce Haynes

Committee Members: Patrick Carroll,
David de la Pena

Abstract:

Over the past 40 years, Master Planned Communities (MPCs) have become increasingly popular among middle and upper middle class homeowners. These mixed-use, primarily residential developments featuring shared amenities are planned and executed by a single developer and marketed to potential homeowners as places of distinction that offer a “total way of life” superior to traditional living arrangements. Current MPC literature is dominated by the assumption that the social, symbolic, and economic mechanisms at work in these developments attenuate residents’ feelings of responsibility for the wider city and lead to high levels of insularity that exacerbate existing patterns of socio-spatial exclusion.

Through a case study of two sustainability-focused MPCs built 40 years apart in the same Northern California city, this research provides a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which temporally situated interactions between MPC form and structure, public and private governance, and resident social characteristics impact the degree of socially exclusionary behaviors and perceptions among residents. Using a mixed-method approach, this study analyzes each MPC's developmental trajectory and relationship with the city in order to understand the ways in which micro, meso, and macro-level structures and processes influence the consistency of resident displays of insularity across MPCs. This comparative study is situated at the intersections of multiple strands of sociological inquiry, including: the neoliberal urbanization process, sustainable development, community identification and attachment, cultural consumption, housing markets, and public heritage narratives. It is the aim of this research to extend and challenge common assumptions within the burgeoning MPC literature by highlighting the ways in which contextually situated elements cohere and converge in uniquely consequential ways.

Name: BB Buchanan

Dissertation Title: "Finding Fascism at the End of the Rainbow"

Committee Chair: Bruce Haynes

Committee Members: Laura Grindstaff
Andreana Clay, San Francisco State University

Abstract:

Fascism and homosexuality as categories emerge at the confluence of race science, sexology, sociology and nationalism during the 20th century. This project traces the discursive negotiations between gay white men and fascist organizations in America – asking how and when homosexuality is leveraged within fascist social movements. How and under what conditions do fascist organizations embrace homosexuality? Simultaneously, how and under what conditions do white gay men embrace fascist political organizing? These categories are seemingly oppositional, as fascist organizations have often taken a public stance against homosexuality as a "plague on the nation" and the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) community has often been depicted as inherently liberal and cosmopolitan. Troubling the obvious, this project outlines the ways in which each category can overlap under particular discursive and political conditions. Tracing this discursive project across the 20th century with the rise of these categories until the present, I argue that rather than an oppositional relationship homosexuality and fascism have, at times, been strange bedfellows. Together, they work to define both the proper citizen and subject of governance (white men, gay or not) by insisting that the real problem "plaguing the nation" lies in the body of the feminized, racialized Other.

Name: Courtney Caviness

Dissertation Title: "Constructing LGBTQ Military Identities: Blurring the Boundaries of Inclusion, Agency, and Exploitation"

Committee Chair: Vicki Smith

Committee Members: Laura Grindstaff
Catherine Connell (Boston University)

Abstract:

Following the 2011 repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell (DADT) and the lifting of the ban on recruitment and "open" military service for transgender people taking effect January 1, 2018, the military workplace today is clearly a far less overtly hostile place for LGBTQ individuals. Many LGBTQ rights advocates view these policy changes as victories and evidence of social progress, while others view them as facilitating the absorption and exploitation of LGBTQ identities and bodies into a burgeoning neoliberal imperialist machine. Using in-depth interviews with LGBTQ military members and recent veterans, I examine how and to what extent LGBTQ military members and those recently discharged find this to be the case. LGBTQ military members' experiences navigating the shifting workplace terrain reflect a precariousness unlike the precariousness experienced in other organizations and workplaces. The unpredictability of military policy and protection for gender and sexual identity under the current presidential administration, in part, lead LGBTQ military members to adopt strategies to distance themselves from femininity and presumed queerness in the military workplace. These strategies constitute forms of gender labor, which have the unintended consequences of upholding informally exclusionary workplace norms. While the labor of explicit exclusion (e.g. during DADT) was formerly on the shoulders of heterosexual and/or cisgender military personnel, such labor has now been implicitly outsourced to the very individuals most disadvantaged by its effects. As such, it is now an invisible (or at the very least, legitimized) way in which LGBTQ military members experience enduring inequalities in today's military workplace.

Name: Chelsi Florence

Dissertation Title: "Standing at the Intersection: Examining the Quest for the American Dream among Black Middle-Class Parents"

Committee Chair: Laura Grindstaff and Bruce Haynes (co-chairs)

Committee Members: Milmon Harrison
Maxine Craig

Abstract:

Historically, middle-class blacks have stood at the intersection of class advantage and racial disadvantage during periods of legalized racial discrimination that differentially affected wealthier blacks compared to their socioeconomically disadvantaged counterparts. Jack and Jill of America is one concrete example of the way affluent blacks navigated their racial marginalization and secured intergenerational mobility prior to the Civil Rights Era. A group of well-to-do black mothers in the 1930s formed the organization to, among other things, foster social connections and develop leadership abilities among their children. Legislation passed during the Civil Rights Era aimed to eradicate lawful racial discrimination, and blacks, especially more affluent ones, presumably face less racism in connection to their racial status. Yet, Jack and Jill still exist today. The questions I intend to explore in this project include: What are the major concerns, challenges, and desires of the black middle class that attract them to communities and organizations like Jack and Jill? How does Jack and Jill specifically help middle-class black parents safeguard mobility for their children today? And how does this enable black middle-class parents to transmit a racialized class identity with the knowledge, skills, and advantages to navigate society today?

Name: Zachary Psick

Dissertation Title: “Prison Boomers and the Age of Prisoner Reentry”

Committee Chair: Ryken Grattet and Bill McCarthy (co-chairs)

Committee Members: Caitlyn Patler
Jonathan Simon

Abstract:

My dissertation research will examine the reentry process of people released from jails and prisons after turning age 55 – a group I call “prison boomers” because of their age group and contribution to the U.S. prison boom. Mass incarceration was spurred by a wave of punitive crime policies that rapidly increased the number of currently and formerly incarcerated people. Many of these people are now entering later life. While most “age out” of offending during young adulthood, a substantial number have continued to cycle through the criminal justice system for decades, usually becoming dependent upon family, neighborhood, and public resources for survival when not incarcerated. I will provide background information about prison boomers and “the age of prisoner reentry,” the contemporary context of the proposed research. I will also draw from various lines of theory that illuminate significant features of reentry in later life as well as factors influencing broader patterns of criminal justice contact across the life course. Most of this work indicates a shift from understanding these patterns through individual behavior and instead highlights the importance of family and community resources, punishment and supervision policies, intergenerational poverty and inequality, and subjective wellbeing. I will investigate these concerns by using a mixed methods research design in conjunction with an analytic approach explicitly aimed toward moving from direct observation of the reentry process in later life to causal explanations based on statistical analyses of data from the National Corrections Reporting Program and other official sources.