

**DISSERTATION COMMITTEES, ACADEMIC YEAR 2015-16:  
CURRENTLY ENROLLED STUDENTS WHO ARE ABD  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF CA, DAVIS**

**\*All faculty are from UC Davis unless otherwise noted\***

**Name:** Jingjing Chen

**Dissertation Title:** “Marital Dissolution in a Changing Patriarchal Society: Trends, Determinants, Changing Effects of Education and Implications on Adults’ Mental Health.”

**Committee Chair:** Xiaoling Shu

**Committee Members:** Erin Hamilton  
Diane Wolf  
Drew Halfman  
Bo Feng

**Abstract:**

My research will expand knowledge on trends and determinants of divorce in China over time and space. China, with its large population experiencing rapid social change, serves as a valuable case in understanding how large-scale social transformations, including economic development, urbanization, migration, and shifts in gender ideology, shapes family dissolution. Since marriage remains a universal and patriarchal institution in China, divorce may carry a physical and mental toll on the parties involved. Exploring effects of marital status on and gender disparity in health within such a social context will shed light on the consequences of social change, as well as the pathways through which social inequality transpires. This dissertation is in the format of three research papers. In the first paper, I will map the change in divorce rates for all prefectures in China from 1982 to 2010, describe demographic, socioeconomic, as well as macro-level societal characteristics, and estimate their effects on divorce. In the second paper, I will focus on the relationship between resources and divorce by evaluating mechanisms through which resources affect individuals’ likelihood of divorce and how this process varies by gender and historical periods. The last paper will explore the effects of marital status on mental health, whether these effects differ for men and women, and how they are mediated by marital satisfaction. I will use data from 1982, 1990, 2000, 2005 (1%), and 2010 China Census, three waves of Chinese Family Panel Studies (2010, 2012, 2014), and 2004 China Statistical Yearbook for Regional Economy in China. I will analyze these data using GIS mapping techniques and multilevel modeling. This will be the first attempt to visualize changes in divorce over more than 300 prefectures in the past thirty years, and by using multilevel modeling, this dissertation will provide a rigorous and systematic test of the association between structural- and individual-level characteristics and marital decisions.

**Name:** Joshua Hayes

**Dissertation Title:** "My America!" Exploring the continued validity of alternative theoretical frameworks for national identity construction in the United States".

**Committee Chair:**

John Hall

**Committee Members:** John Hall  
Ming-Cheng Lo  
Ryan Finnigan  
Paco Martorell

**Abstract:**

National identity is a broad concept that scholars have approached from a number of differing theoretical entry points. Scholarship on the origins of "nation" tend to focus on national identity as forming only after a shared understanding of identity categories gains sufficient salience among a population. Individuals may be led to see themselves as similar due to social changes from industrialization, modernization, shared language or religion, or the spread of bureaucratization. However, because national identity is based on collective identity, it has some degree of intersubjectivity. Alternatively, scholars have shown that individuals consciously act, or are driven subconsciously, to reinterpret the social world in ways that benefit their self-concept, perceived identity, and to achieve favorable outcomes. From this perspective, identity-categories are more subjective and reflect goals and desires respective to each individual. Lastly, narrative constitution of identity attempts to shift away from traditional epistemological frameworks and contextualize identity formation as deeply as possible based on an individual's social location on numerous axes (religion, race, gender, socio-economic status), across time, and relative to other actors. The following project proposal aims to use self-reported survey data on the symbolic bases of national identity construction in order to explore the continued validity of these explanatory frameworks for the landscape of national identity construction in the United States across the past 18 years.

**Name:** Ashlyn Jaeger

**Dissertation Title:** "Freezing Uncertainty: A Feminist Genealogy of Risk in the Field of Gamete Cryopreservation."

**Committee Chair:** Patrick Carroll

**Committee Members:** Diane Wolf  
Thomas Beamish

**Abstract:**

Reproductive technologies and infertility are wrought with ambiguities and uncertainties. This research will focus on the role of gender and other social positions in shaping the construction and navigation of risk in the field of egg and sperm freezing (formally referred to as gamete cryopreservation). To assemble a feminist genealogy of risk, my research plan is two-fold. First, I will conduct a content analysis of historical materials documenting the development of research and medical use of gamete cryopreservation in the biomedical sciences, media, and in fertility clinics. Second, to understand how consumers construct, perceive, and negotiate risks concerning egg and sperm freezing within this larger historical and institutional context, I will conduct field work in fertility clinics, including semi-structured interviews with consumers of the gamete banking. This research will contribute to the sociology of risk and the sociology of reproduction by expanding our understanding of how risk perception is shaped by gender ideologies in the context of the fertility industry. Furthermore, this research will contribute to our understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of egg and sperm banking as they are experienced by consumers with the hope of informing regulations aiming to promote the health and decision-making of people who may desire to use these services.

**Name:** Rachel Nickens

**Dissertation Title:** “Girl Scouting at the Community Level.”

**Committee Chair:** Laura Grindstaff

**Committee Members:** Vicki Smith  
Corrie Decker

**Abstract:**

The Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) are engaging in a project to keep girl scouting relevant in the twenty-first century. They have linked badge activities with K-12 common core educational standards, introduced a “digital cookie sales” platform, and emphasized the STEM fields and leadership development, among other changes. While the Boy Scouts continue to tread carefully around the “gay” and “god” issues, Girl Scouts have taken a more progressive stance, welcoming girls and adults regardless of sexual orientation or religious beliefs and allowing transgender girls. Despite all of these changes, the Girl Scouts of the United States of America is still *Girl* Scouts, an explicitly gendered organization. Previous researchers have looked at the content of scouting handbooks as manuals of socialization or as indicative of cultural ideologies about gender. However, what is in the books may not reflect what is happening on the ground. Furthermore, while there has been sufficient research on Boy Scouts and boy culture, there is a shortage of scholarly research on the Girl Scouts. Given this context, this research project asks: How do local troops incorporate shifting national organizational ideology? If the Girl Scouts of the United States of America has in mind the creation of a specific type of girl, how do troops at the community level engage with these ideologies? How are troop leaders, volunteers, and girl members engaged in their own project of creating idealized girlhood, and how does this vary depending on the racial and class makeup of the troop?

**Name:** Nathen Menard

**Dissertation Title:** “Losing Ground in Disasters: How Disasters and Disaster Response Practices are used as Social Tools to Create, Recreate and Reinforce Social Inequalities.”

**Committee Chair:** Drew Halfmann

**Committee Members:** Drew Halfmann  
Bruce Haynes  
David Pellow- University of California Santa Barbara

**Abstract:**

Extensive work in the disaster vulnerabilities field has found that “environmental calamities are shaped by the already existing social, political, environmental and economic conditions” (Bolin 2007). Such analysis has proven invaluable in revealing the continuing existence of deeply embedded structural and institutional inequalities in society and how those inequalities shape vulnerability to disasters. Unintentionally, however, the conceptualization of disasters as strategic research sites also serves to unintentionally ignore and analytically downplay the role that the history of disasters response processes have in actively shaping and reinforcing structural and institutional inequalities. Using a longitudinal case study to reveal historical legacies in disaster response practices, this paper argues that disasters not only reveal pre-existing inequalities, but also actively create, recreate and reinforce social inequalities in historically meaningful ways.

**Name:** Amara Miller

**Dissertation Title:** ”Yoga R/Evolution: Deconstructing the “Authentic” Yoga Body”

**Committee Chair:** John Hall

**Committee Members:** John Hall  
Laura Grindstaff  
Andrea Jain- University of Indiana

**Abstract:**

As yoga became popularized in the United States after the 1960s, processes of cultural appropriation, commodification, and professionalization resulted in the secularization of the practice, transforming what once was a spiritual tradition into a fitness industry worth over \$16.8 billion. Thinking about these processes as part of a larger context of spiritual neocolonialism, I investigate the evolution of the practice: What does being a yogi entail, and how have practitioners and the yoga industry constructed this embodied identity at various social and historical moments? How is the construction of the “authentic” yoga body as thin, young, white, female, affluent, and capable of complex postures institutionalized during the professionalization project, contributing to inequality and inaccessibility for select populations? In an exploration of revolution within yoga, this project reveals how nondominant actors involved in the body positivity movement are engaging in resistance and rebellion utilizing new media technologies, contesting stereotypical representations in an effort to reconstruct ideas of authenticity

within the practice. How do marginalized populations within body positivity resist dominant cultural representations of the “authentic” yoga body, reemphasizing yoga’s spiritual roots and ethical traditions in alignment with intersectional movements for social justice and equity? How are such efforts undermined by industry co-optation?