

Dr. Aimee Rickman  
Associate Professor, Department of Communication  
College of Arts and Humanities  
Sabbatical Report (2021- 2022 AY)

My two-semester sabbatical occurred in AY 2021-2022.

During this time, I transcribed and analyzed ethnographic data I had compiled from on- and offline research involving college-age gender-minority youth interlocutors from California's Central Valley that considered push and pull motivations behind, and young people's involvement in, media migration. I also read extensively, and I compiled literature reviews situating this data within transdisciplinary scholarly contexts.

The past year involved seismic shifts in legal rights, social norms, and cultural climates in the U.S., many of which impacted my interlocutors' opportunities for safety, support, justice, and well-being. This sabbatical enabled me to adapt my analysis and writing to document and reflect upon quickly-changing geopolitical realities. I completed a draft of all six chapters of my book on my sabbatical. I continue to polish these chapters and my book proposal as I reach out to editors and presses.

As part of my book drafting, I wrote four article-length manuscripts. I submitted two of these manuscripts to mainstream press outlets, and one to a journal. All were accepted and are now published. In June, a newspaper requested and was given permission to reprint the most recent piece, resulting in four publications of my writing during my sabbatical year. An additional manuscript was submitted to an academic journal; it is currently awaiting decision based on peer review.

In collaboration with two colleagues—one an artist, the other, an engineer—I also completed mixed-media art project based on my research, and I hosted a public showing of this work in March 2022.

My planned month-long April 2022 sabbatical travel to Finland was sadly not approved by the university. Due to Level 4 travel restrictions, on March 22, 2022, Provost Fu informed me through CASS Interim Dean Ogunjemiyo that this proposed travel to Finland could not be approved by the university. I cancelled all of my reservations, alerted my colleague host in Finland to the unfortunate news, and amended my sabbatical proposal to reflect the fact that the scheduled travel was not permitted by Fresno State and could not transpire (see Attachment A). On March 23, I sent this amended sabbatical proposal to Interim Dean Ogunjemiyo, who approved the changes (see Attachment B).

Lastly, as part of my sabbatical, I built relationships with community members who work in areas related to my Youth and Social Media Research Lab. While COVID limited the amount and type of connections possible, and while university non-sanctioning of my travel plans kept me from forming relationships with scholars of youth, media, and culture I had looked forward to meeting abroad, I investigated and connected with numerous professionals whose work relates to my lab. As part of this, among other things, during my sabbatical, I gave an invited paper to the 10th International Conference of the European Council for Social Research on Latin America, and I presented a talk to a freshman English class in Ukiah, California discussing ways people study youth and technologies. I volunteered with a youth-serving organization, and I became part of the editorial board for a community newspaper. Through this, I formed valuable new ties to individuals and organizations actively involved in addressing issues related to youth,

culture, and new media. This expanded knowledge bolsters my network of allies and potential collaborators as it helps people know about the work I do as a Fresno State faculty member.

### **Publications**

Rickman, A. (June, 2022). “We are not done”: Policy, protections, and the people’s struggle for Pride. *Public i*. <http://publici.ucimc.org/2022/06/we-are-not-done-policy-protections-and-the-peoples-struggle-for-pride/> (Invited reprint.)

Rickman, A. (June 10, 2022). “We are not done”: Policy, protections, and the people’s struggle for Pride. *Monthly Review*. <https://mronline.org/2022/06/10/we-are-not-done-policy-protections-and-the-peoples-struggle-for-pride/>

Rickman, A. & Saxton, D. I. (July 21, 2021). Strange: Challenging pandemic logics. *Monthly Review*. <https://mronline.org/2021/07/21/strange-challenging-pandemic-logics/>

Rickman, A. & Cavallaro, A. (2021). The people are the plague”: Rhetorics of blame during COVID-19. *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society*, 1(9). <http://www.presenttensejournal.org/volume-9/the-people-are-the-plague-rhetorics-of-blame-during-covid-19/>

## **Attachment A**

**Aimee Rickman**  
Department of Child and Family Science  
Sabbatical Proposal  
College of Social Sciences  
*Amended March 23, 2022*

## **THE PROPOSAL**

I propose a two-semester sabbatical leave. The primary project will entail research and completion of a manuscript draft considering the media migration of U.S. adolescents. This will involve transcription and analysis of ethnographic data, literature and document review, development and shopping of a book proposal, and chapter drafting, editing, and revision.

This leave had also intended to involve gaining cultural perspective on youth and adolescence outside of the U.S. with travel to Finland as a visiting scholar guest of Dr. Kris Clark, an Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of Helsinki. Due to Level 4 travel restrictions, on March 22, 2022, Provost Fu informed me through Dean Ogunjemiyo that this proposed travel to Finland can not be approved by the university. My sabbatical proposal is now amended in reflection of this recent information regarding disallowed travel.

A smaller third project for this sabbatical will be devoted to forming community relationships to better understand local needs, resources, and capacities in order to assist in the visioning of the Youth and Social Media Research Lab, and of possible future community-based partnerships focused upon youth and social technologies.

### **Description of primary project**

In the West, young people in adolescence are tasked with developing identities. Critical and sociocultural perspectives understand identities to result from social existence, with individual meaning-making tied to involvement within a wider culture (Fivush & Zaman, 2015;

Giddens, 1991; Goffman, 1971; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). Identities related to education, economics, and career take on special import within capitalistic societies like the U.S. that associate financial independence with adulthood (Arnett, 2000). However, financial independence is becoming increasingly difficult for young people to secure in the U.S. Indeed, for decades, researchers have noted that the period of adolescence lengthening due to economically-driven social changes.

Stable jobs are far less available to those who opt out of post-secondary schooling now than they were thirty years ago in this country (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2015). The current generation has experienced a steep increase in college tuition rates beyond what their parents encountered (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), making higher education financially impossible for many, especially those subject to structural racism. Diplomas regularly come tied to debt and dwindling options to fund graduate studies. Even before the 2020 recession, many graduates faced underemployment and found available employment often lacking in pay, benefits, and possibilities for promotion (*ibid*). Additionally, funds have faded from the public sphere, weakening social safety nets, adding burdens to adults who have historically provided mentorship and direction, and hastening downward mobility (Chetty, Grusky, Hell, Hendren, Manduca & Narang, 2017).

Despite their efforts, young people in the United States today face increasingly complex and less certain access to full rights and standing in adult identities. Instead, youth must struggle to find direction and to become a meaningful part of society. Additionally, as youth, they are subject to normalized structural inequities that deprive them of respect, rights, and protections. Media studies scholarship refutes new media's ability to, in themselves, challenge structural hierarchies (Eubanks, 2018; MacKinnon, 2012; Nakamura, 2002; Noble, 2018). Despite this, and

absent other supports, members of marginalized communities are urged to place their hope in social media to address oppressive conditions and to bring about justice (Berliner, 2018). Indeed, social media have been found to present new possibilities for social involvement (Baym, 2011; boyd, 2014; Ito et al., 2010; Livingstone, 2008).

My first book documented Midwestern high school girls attempts to negotiate around intractable offline challenges, and turning to what I term “media migration” to try to disconnect from hostile, isolating offline environments by moving themselves to and through online spaces seeking more promising opportunities. Inspired by “hustle” discourses, media migration offered youth rare opportunities for community and comfort. It also contributed to conditions that maintained young women’s marginality.

This current study considers how media migration relates to a different group of youth at a new point in this country’s history. Building upon my previous interrogation of youth media migration, this manuscript draws upon ethnographic interviews with college-aged adolescents from California’s Central Valley along with cultural analysis and semiotic research to consider the complex connections between young people’s media migrations and their offline struggles to gain social relevance in today’s America.

This study considers the media migration of young people in the U.S, documenting the offline conditions that motivate them to use social media as they negotiate life.

### **Description of secondary project that will not be completed due to recent university international travel requirements**

Adolescence is a cultural phenomenon. As a scholar of adolescence, it is of value to occasionally step outside of the U.S. to both learn about and reflect upon the different ways in

which cultures maintain the infrastructures of adolescence. Doing so opens up opportunities for new understandings of economic, political, and social realities that define and bound this period before adulthood while providing fresh eyes with which to look back upon U.S. adolescence. Travel to the University of Helsinki during sabbatical would have allowed me to have these reflective learning opportunities. Arrangements were made for this exchange to occur in spring 2022. However, due to 2021-2022 travel restrictions, the university has informed me that this travel is not approvable. It will no longer be part of my sabbatical.

### **Description of smaller third project**

For more than four years, I have run a Youth and Social Media Research Lab. Our small department does not have the ability to offer a class on media technologies. To date, my Youth and Social Media Research lab has provided opportunities for around 100 bright Fresno State undergraduates to study youth and families within the contexts of new media. Social media are a core part of U.S. society. Study of social media through this lab has enabled our students to gain important understandings on development, socialization, technology, media, and culture.

Time will be given during this sabbatical to investigate and build relationships in the community with others doing work related to lab. This will support the development of future university- and community-based partnerships focused around youth and social technologies.

**Timeline:**

<b>August – September 2021</b>	<b>Transcribing interviews; Book proposal writing; Literature and document review; Visiting scholar travel planning</b>
<b>October – December 2021</b>	<b>Data analysis; Literature review; Chapter writing; Book proposal shopping; Revising conference papers; Identifying potential community contacts</b>
<b>January 2022 – March 2022</b>	<b>Chapter writing; Literature review; Book proposal shopping; Reaching out to community contacts</b>
<b>March – May 2022</b>	<b><del>University of Helsinki visit</del>; Literature review; Chapter writing; Chapter editing</b>

**SABBATICAL BENEFITS**

As a Fresno State faculty member, this leave will enable me to gain greater command of current research from across multiple fields documenting the social and lived realities of diverse youth in the U.S. while also allowing me to code, process, and synthesize qualitative interviews from my interlocutors. It will grant me the time and focus needed to integrate my findings into wider interdisciplinary conversations, and to finally complete my second book manuscript.

This sabbatical will provide me an opportunity to strengthen my teaching. I will become more knowledgeable of relevant research and gain important understandings about the infrastructures and lived realities of youth. This will increase my capacity to share both current and widened cultural understandings of youth with my students in courses I teach, enriching course curricula on children and youth available to Fresno State students. This invaluable

pedagogical professional development will benefit the Department of Child and Family Science and the College of Social Sciences.

This leave will also increase my academic productivity, granting me time needed to translate timely and important ethnographic data on Central Valley youth into a manuscript, a book proposal, and, ideally, a book publication contract. The research I complete for this book will be shared with the academic community through scholarly publication. It will be shared with the public as part of my ongoing Tech Talk series. This sabbatical will result in academic scholarship that will bring esteem and positive attention to the university.

Furthermore, these projects will allow me rare time to prioritize the development of connections with other scholars of youth, media, and culture, and to build relationships with youth and new media practitioners in the community and throughout the world. This will nurture valuable local and global relationships that will benefit our students, academic units, and partners while expanding and strengthening Fresno State's community.

As previously stated, official university international travel restrictions leading to non-approval of my sabbatical travel to Finland by Provost Fu on March 22, 2022 result in my sabbatical not allowing for the widened understanding of youth and culture outside of the U.S. or for the new relationship building beyond U.S. borders initially envisioned for this leave. The change in sabbatical plans removing international travel from this leave is reflected here in this amended written proposal, as outlined as required in the April 7, 2021 sabbatical confirmation letter from Diane Volpp of Fresno State's Office of Faculty Affairs.

### **CSU RESOURCES NEEDED**

No resources are needed to support this project beyond time for leave.

Thank you for your consideration of my proposal.

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## **Attachment B**



Aimee Rickman &lt;arickman@mail.fresnostate.edu&gt;

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**Fwd: Travel Request from Aimee Richman**

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**Aimee Rickman** <arickman@csufresno.edu>

Wed, Apr 27, 2022 at 3:29 PM

To: Segun Ogunjemiyo &lt;sogunjemiyo@mail.fresnostate.edu&gt;

Cc: Jim Schmidtke &lt;jmschmidtke@mail.fresnostate.edu&gt;, FacRightsChair- CFA Fresno &lt;facrightschair.fr@calfac.org&gt;

Thank you, Dean Ogunjemiyo.

I appreciate being informed that these sabbatical changes have been approved by you, and that my amended proposal has been added to the original sabbatical proposal in my file.

Have a gentle end to the semester.

Aimee

On Wed, Apr 27, 2022 at 2:48 AM Segun Ogunjemiyo <sogunjemiyo@mail.fresnostate.edu> wrote:

Hello Aimee,

I thought I had communicated to you that I approved the changes you requested. The amended proposal you submitted has been added to your file. .

Regards;

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Segun Ogunjemiyo, PhD  
Interim Dean, College of Social Sciences  
Professor, Department of Geography and City and Regional Planning  
California State University, Fresno  
5340 North Campus Drive, M/S SS91  
Fresno, CA 93740  
email: [sogunjemiyo@mail.fresnostate.edu](mailto:sogunjemiyo@mail.fresnostate.edu)  
phone: 559-278-3013

On Mon, Apr 25, 2022 at 10:23 AM Aimee Rickman <arickman@csufresno.edu> wrote:

Hello, Dean Ogunjemiyo.

I hope you are having a wonderful Monday.

As you know from the email you forwarded to me from the Provost on March 22, 2022, my planned sabbatical travel to Finland was unfortunately not approved by the university.

Since this sabbatical travel was not university-approved, I regretfully cancelled all of my travel plans to Finland scheduled for earlier this month. As outlined as required in the April 7, 2021 sabbatical approval letter I received from Faculty Affairs, I also wrote a formal amended written proposal removing travel to Finland from my sabbatical plans, and I submitted this written proposal to you via email on March 23, 2022. (see below)

I have not yet received approval from you for the change to my sabbatical plans necessitated by sabbatical travel failing to be approved by the university, or notification that this amended written proposal has been added to my file. The April 2021

letter from Faculty Affairs outlines this as needed. (see attached)

### Changes to your Sabbatical

- In the event you must alter the leave proposal, submit an amended written proposal to the Dean for approval prior to implementation of the changes. The Dean will need to approve all changes in writing for placement with your original proposal.
- While you may be able to defer a sabbatical from the Fall to the Spring in a given

I called the COSS Dean's Office before Spring Break and left a message on voicemail asking for clarification of whether this amendment to my sabbatical proposal has been added to my file or if I need to do anything further. I have not heard back. I am sure everyone is extremely busy.

I am hoping you could let me know how to best proceed to ensure that this amendment is added to my file. I do not want this documentation lost in the busy end-of-semester shuffle or otherwise not added to my official paperwork.

I am copying Faculty Affairs on this email since they issued the April 7, 2021 letter outlining procedures to follow when sabbatical alterations are needed. I am also copying CFA.

Thank you for your help with this matter.

Wishing you a lovely start to the day,

Aimee

On Wed, Mar 30, 2022 at 9:43 AM Aimee Rickman <[arickman@csufresno.edu](mailto:arickman@csufresno.edu)> wrote:

Hello. Dean Ogunjemiyo.

Based on the April 7, 2021 sabbatical letter I received from Faculty Affairs (see attached), I understand that the amended written proposal I sent last week outlining the change to my sabbatical plans necessitated by the Provost's March 22, 2022 non-approval of travel requires your written approval, and that this approval needs to be added to my file to accompany my original sabbatical proposal.

Please do let me know if you need more from me to formally approve my March 23, 2022 amended written sabbatical proposal.

Thank you.

Aimee

On Wed, Mar 23, 2022 at 12:41 PM Aimee Rickman <[arickman@csufresno.edu](mailto:arickman@csufresno.edu)> wrote:

Dean Ogunjemiyo,

This is quite disappointing, but I greatly appreciate your willingness to help me look into this and to understand how to proceed.

Attached, please find my amended written sabbatical proposal modified in light of this information from the Provost stating that travel to Finland can not be approved by the university. Without university approval, it is not able to be part of my sabbatical.

The attached amended proposal reflects changes to my sabbatical resulting from this official travel restriction. It is being sent as outlined as required in the April 7, 2021 letter from Diane Volpp of Faculty Affairs (see below) for sabbatical proposal changes.



California  
State  
University,  
Fresno

April 7, 2021

Aimee Rickman  
Department of Child and Family Science  
College of Social Sciences

Congratulations on the approval of your Academic Year sabbatical during the 2021-2022 Academic Year. In order for you to get the most from the time the campus awarded you, I am providing information regarding sabbatical leaves. Please refer to CBA Article 27:Sabbatical Leaves and APM 361 Policy on Faculty Leaves for complete information.

Prior to taking your Sabbatical

- You must file an acceptable bond, provide a list of assets, or sign a promissory note sufficient to guarantee the State against loss in event there is a failure to render one semester of service for each semester of leave. Promissory note form can be found here <http://fresnostate.edu/academics/facultyaffairs/documents/leaves/promissory.pdf>

Changes to your Sabbatical

- In the event you must alter the leave proposal, submit an amended written proposal to the Dean for approval prior to implementation of the changes. The Dean will need to approve all changes in writing for placement with your original proposal.
- While you may be able to defer a sabbatical from the Fall to the Spring in a given

Please do let me know if I should be doing anything further.

Thank you.

Aimee

On Wed, Mar 23, 2022 at 3:27 AM Segun Ogunjemiyo <[sogunjemiyo@mail.fresnostate.edu](mailto:sogunjemiyo@mail.fresnostate.edu)> wrote:  
FYI

Segun Ogunjemiyo, PhD  
Interim Dean, College of Social Sciences  
Professor, Department of Geography and City and Regional Planning  
California State University, Fresno  
5340 North Campus Drive, M/S SS91  
Fresno, CA 93740  
email: [sogunjemiyo@mail.fresnostate.edu](mailto:sogunjemiyo@mail.fresnostate.edu)  
phone: 559-278-3013

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Xuanning Fu** <[xfu@csufresno.edu](mailto:xfu@csufresno.edu)>  
Date: Tue, Mar 22, 2022 at 4:59 PM  
Subject: Re: Travel Request from Aimee Richman  
To: Segun Ogunjemiyo <[sogunjemiyo@mail.fresnostate.edu](mailto:sogunjemiyo@mail.fresnostate.edu)>

Finland is a risk Level 4 destination and the trip cannot be approved at this time. Sorry.

Xuanning

Xuanning Fu, Ph.D.  
Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
California State University, Fresno  
Fresno, CA 93740-8014  
(559) 278-2636/[xfu@csufresno.edu](mailto:xfu@csufresno.edu)

On Tue, Mar 22, 2022 at 3:58 PM Segun Ogunjemiyo <[sogunjemiyo@mail.fresnostate.edu](mailto:sogunjemiyo@mail.fresnostate.edu)> wrote:  
Dear Provost Fu,

Dr. Aimee Rickman, who is on sabbatical, is seeking your approval to travel to Finland in April. Her personal funds will be used for the trip.

**Name, Department/Division:** Aimee Rickman, Child and Family Science

**Destination:** Helsinki, Finland

**Dates:** April 7 2022 - April 28 2022

**Estimated Cost:** \$3500

**Funding source:** Personal funds..

**Purpose:** To consider adolescence-related policy and culture and build research connections in liaising with Dr. Kris Clark of University of Helsinki to complete sabbatical requirements

Regards;

Segun

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Segun Ogunjemiyo, PhD  
Interim Dean, College of Social Sciences  
Professor, Department of Geography and City and Regional Planning  
California State University, Fresno  
5340 North Campus Drive, M/S SS91  
Fresno, CA 93740  
email: [sogunjemiyo@mail.fresnostate.edu](mailto:sogunjemiyo@mail.fresnostate.edu)  
phone: 559-278-3013

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**Aimee Rickman, PhD**

Associate Professor, Department of Child and Family Science

Founding Director, Youth & Social Media Research Lab

California State University, Fresno

Department Rep California Faculty Association

Author *Adolescence, Girlhood, and Media Migration* (Lexington, 2018)

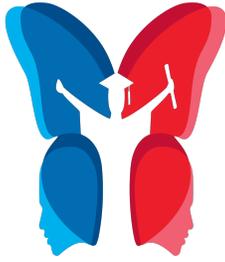
Pronouns: she/her ([Here](#) are [some thoughts](#) on why stating this matters.)

Fresno State sits in the midst of the San Joaquin Valley, a valley rich in the traditions and representation of Native American peoples and cultures. We are grateful to be in the traditional homelands of the Yokuts and Mono peoples, whose diverse tribal communities share stewardship over this land.

"Conduct your blooming in the noise and whip of the whirlwind." - Gwendolyn Brooks

"Every line we succeed in publishing today—no matter how uncertain the future to which we entrust it—is a victory wrenched from the powers of darkness." - Walter Benjamin

"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." - James Baldwin



**UNDOCU** ALLY  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

