

DAVID MCELHATTAN

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EDUCATION

2018	Ph.D., Sociology, Northwestern University
2013	M.A., Sociology, Northwestern University
2010	B.A., Sociology, Philosophy, Boston University (Magna Cum Laude)

PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS

2026 – present	Assistant Professor, College of Criminology & Criminal Justice, Florida State University
2018 – 2026	Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Purdue University
2017 – 2018	Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Humboldt State University

RESEARCH AREAS

Punishment | Stratification & Inequality | Law & Society | Collateral Consequences

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

McElhattan, David. 2025. “Life Sentences and Minor Offenses: Benchmarking, Recalibration, and the Culture of Collateral Consequence Reform.” *Law & Policy* 47(2): <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/lapo.70000>

McElhattan, David. 2024. “Criminal Background Check Laws and Labor Market Inequality in the United States.” *Criminology & Public Policy* 23(2): 391-429. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12662>

- Winner, *Criminology & Public Policy* Best Paper Award for Early-Career Scholars.

McElhattan, David and Spencer Headworth. 2024. “Immobilized: (In)congruent Collateral Consequences and Racialized Driver’s License Restrictions.” *Punishment & Society* 26(2): 304-324. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14624745231218815>

McElhattan, David. 2022. “The Proliferation of Criminal Background Check Laws in the United States.” *American Journal of Sociology* 127(4): 1037-1093. <https://doi.org/10.1086/718262>

McElhattan, David. 2022. “The Exception as the Rule: Negligent Hiring Liability, Structured Uncertainty, and the Rise of Criminal Background Checks in the United States.” *Law & Social Inquiry* 47(1): 132-161. <https://doi.org/10.1017/lsi.2021.35>

- McElhatten, David.** 2022. "Punitive Ambiguity: State-level Criminal Record Data Quality in the Era of Widespread Background Screening." *Punishment & Society* 24(3): 367-386.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474521989502>
- McElhatten, David.** 2018. "'\$40 to Make Sure': Background Check Laws and the Endogenous Construction of Criminal Risk." *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society* 77: 99-121.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/S1059-433720180000077005>
- McElhatten, David,** Laura Beth Nielsen, and Jill Weinberg. 2017. "Race and Determinations of Discrimination: Vigilance, Cynicism, Skepticism, and Attitudes about Legal Mobilization in Employment Civil Rights." *Law & Society Review* 51(3): 669-703.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/lasr.12276>
- Weinberg, Jill, Jeremy Freese, and **David McElhatten.** 2014. "Comparing Data Characteristics and Results of an Online Factorial Survey between a Population-based and a Crowdsourced Recruited Sample." *Sociological Science* 1: 292-31. <https://doi.org/10.15195/v1.a19>

AWARDS & GRANTS

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| 2024-2026 | Kaiser, Joshua and David McElhatten. "Mechanisms and Extent of Penal Inequality in the United States." Russell Sage Foundation Program on Social, Political, and Economic Inequality. Role: Subcontract Principal Investigator. Total award: \$74,813; Purdue subaward: \$17,245. |
| 2025 | <i>Criminology & Public Policy</i> Best Paper Award for Early-Career Scholars. |
| 2020 | Daryl Evans Undergraduate Teaching Award, Purdue University, Department of Sociology |
| 2016-2017 | American Bar Foundation-Northwestern University Doctoral Fellowship |
| 2016-2017 | Graduate Research Grant, Northwestern University (\$3,000) |
| 2012 | MacArthur Collaborative Research Grant (with Laura Beth Nielsen) (\$1,200) |

PRESENTATIONS

- "Criminal Background Check Laws and Labor Market Inequality in the United States." American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, 2023.
- "Immobilized: (In)congruent Collateral Consequences and Racialized Driver's License Restrictions," with Spencer Headworth. Law & Society Association Annual Meeting, San Juan, 2023.
- "The Stigma Bind: Bifurcation and the Boundaries of Collateral Consequence Reform." Law & Society Association Annual Meeting, Lisbon, 2022.

- “The Exception as the Rule: Negligent Hiring Liability, Structured Uncertainty, and the Rise of Criminal Background Checks in the United States.” American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, Chicago, 2021.
- “The Exception as the Rule: Negligent Hiring Liability, Structured Uncertainty, and the Rise of Criminal Background Checks in the United States.” American Sociological Association Annual Meeting (virtual), 2021.
- “Employer Liability and the Rise of Criminal Record Checks: An Analysis of Decisions in Negligent Hiring Cases, 1971-2019.” Law & Society Association Annual Meeting (virtual), 2021.
- “Post-Conviction Criminal Background Searches.” Texas A&M Law Review Virtual Symposium, *From Investigation to Post-Conviction: Technology and Privacy in Modern Criminal Procedure*. March 2021. [Invited]
- “Dynamics of Penal Variation: State-Level Hidden Sentence Regimes,” with Joshua Kaiser, Brittany Friedman, and Zach Sommers. American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, San Francisco, 2019.
- “Criminal Risk and Institutional Environments: Negligent Hiring Liability, the Human Resources Profession, and the Rise of Criminal Background Screening in the United States.” Law & Society Association Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., 2019.
- “‘\$40 to Make Sure’: Background Check Laws and the Endogenous Construction of Criminal Risk.” American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, 2018.
- “‘\$40 to Make Sure’: Background Check Laws and the Endogenous Construction of Criminal Risk.” Law & Society Association Annual Meeting, Toronto, 2018.
- “Race, Records, and the Governance of Risk: The Proliferation of Criminal History Background Checks in the Era of Mass Incarceration.” American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Montreal, 2017.
- “Race, Records, and the Governance of Risk: The Proliferation of Criminal History Background Checks in the Era of Mass Incarceration.” Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, Mexico City, 2017.
- “Racialized Risk: The Proliferation of Criminal History Background Checks in the Era of Mass Incarceration.” Crime, Law, and Deviance Workshop, Northwestern University, 2017.
- “‘\$40 to Make Sure’: Commonsense Risk Management and the Proliferation of Criminal Background Checks.” Chabreja Center for Historical Studies, Northwestern University, 2017.

“Race, Records, and the Governance of Risk: The Proliferation of Criminal History Background Checks in the Era of Mass Incarceration.” Social Science History Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, 2016.

“The Proliferation of Criminal History Background Checks in the Era of Mass Incarceration.” American Bar Foundation Research Seminar, Chicago, 2016.

“The Proliferation of Criminal History Background Checks in the Era of Mass Incarceration.” Law & Society Association Annual Meeting, New Orleans, 2016.

“Race, Rights, and Collective Memory.” American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, 2015.

“Race, Rights, and Collective Memory.” Social Science History Association Annual Meeting, Toronto, 2014.

“Determining Discrimination: What Workplace Disputes Constitute Race Discrimination and What Ordinary Citizens Think Should be Done,” with Laura Beth Nielsen. Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, 2014.

“Determining Discrimination: The Effect of Race and Political Ideology in Evaluations of Workplace Disputes,” with Laura Beth Nielsen. Law & Society Association Annual Meeting, Boston, 2013.

COMMENTARY AND ENGAGEMENT

Panelist, *Just Policing* roundtable, Purdue Department of Philosophy, November 14, 2022.

Panelist, Drug Policy Alliance webinar: “Drug War Dragnet: Surveillance, Criminalization, & Freedom from Drug War Targeting.” April 28, 2022.

Podcast interview, *This Week in Sociological Perspective* with Samuel R. Lucas. April 23, 2021.

“Myths and Realities of Criminal Investigations.” Tippecanoe Public Library, October 2018.

Leadership Council on Legal Diversity, statistical consulting and analysis, 2013-2018.

TEACHING

Purdue University

Sociology of Law

Social Deviance and Control

Criminology

Humboldt State University

Criminological Theory

Social Issues and Action

Sociology Senior Thesis Seminar

Northwestern University
Race, Politics, and the Law

SERVICE

Department of Sociology, Purdue University
Search Committee, Criminology tenure-track, 2023
Search Committee, Criminology lecturer, 2023
Search Committee, Criminology tenure-track, 2022
Search Committee, Criminology tenure-track, 2021
Undergraduate Committee, 2022-2023
Awards Committee, 2021-2022
Colloquium Committee, 2019-2020

Purdue University
College of Liberal Arts Senate, Spring 2023
Horizons Faculty Mentor, Fall 2022, Fall 2024

Review

American Journal of Sociology; Criminology; Justice Quarterly; Law & Society Review; Law & Social Inquiry; Politics, Groups, and Identities; Punishment & Society; Social Currents; Social Forces; Social Problems; National Science Foundation.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

American Sociological Association
 Crime, Law and Deviance section
 Sociology of Law section

American Society of Criminology

Law & Society Association
 CRN-27: Punishment & Society