Greetings from the AKD Board

Welcome to the Fall Semester of 2020!

Hello and welcome to the new academic year! We hope that you all had a restful summer, were able to find a new normal, and get some well-deserved rest. This upcoming year will look different for the department and AKD in many ways, but we on the AKD Board are determined to find a path ahead that generates and sustains our connections to each other, our campus, community, and to the larger world which we strive to better through our academic endeavors.

Due to university and state recommendations, we have elected to suspend all in-person AKD events for the fall term. The board is working on alternatives, such as Zoom happy hours, movie nights, and a virtual game night, so stay tuned for upcoming events!

This year's NAMI walk, scheduled for October 10th, has been made virtual. Due to this change our chapter is still able to participate in our 6th annual NAMI Walk as “Dr. Gallagher’s Team”. A virtual walk means that you can elect to walk solo or socially distanced in a small group. For those of you with families, this is a great way to get outside and get active. Also, with the event being virtual it means that you can walk at any time on the 10th that works for you. This also gives you the ability to set your own route, it just needs to be approximately 5k (3.1 miles).

If you are interested in the NAMI Walk please sign up at https://www.namiwalks.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=cms.home. All members of the department, faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergrads, along with their family and friends are invited to join the team as well.

The order form for the team t-shirts is attached to the last page of this newsletter. We also ask that when you complete your walk that you take a selfie, in your t-shirt, and post it to social media and tag the department’s Twitter and Facebook so that we can share our accomplishments with each other as we would if we had walked side-by-side.

If you do not want to join “Dr. Gallagher's Team”, we ask that you consider making a donation to our team-page: https://www.namiwalks.org/team/38636. You can also ask others to make donations using this link. If everyone can just take a moment to ask a few friends or family for a hand, we're certain that we can meet our $1,500 fundraising goal.

AKD is always looking for new ideas, opportunities, and ways to optimize how we do things. We are always open to suggestions and looking for board members for the next year. Positions become available on the board every year, so you can be the change you wish to see in the department by joining the AKD board next year!

We especially want to thank everyone who's contributed their time and resources to AKD over the years: past boards, our faculty advisor, and members of the department. Thank you all, we could not do this without you.

Best,
Amelia Davies Robinson, President
Courtney Dress, Vice President
Cynthia Hunt, Treasurer
Chloe Miller, Social Chair
Brandon Ehlinger, Secretary
Maddy Steward, Program Chair
Michelle Fretwell, Program Chair
Dr. Kristen Marcussen, Advisor
Chair's Note: Dr. Richard Adams

I was thinking about doing a bit of crystal ball gazing and make some guesses about where the Department of Sociology, and Sociology more generally, might be going. I make no claims that my look to the future is any more accurate than others, but I'll try to give an "educated" guess. First, it goes without saying that the novel coronavirus has changed the way we work. Before the shutdown of Kent State last March, I rarely used Zoom or other conferencing platforms. Now I use them all the time, and that is unlikely to change during the Fall or Spring semesters. It will most likely continue after the coronavirus is an event in our past. I am currently learning new technology to teach face-to-face and virtually, simultaneously. I'm learning to teach with a mask and mike, something I have never done before. I'm sure everyone reading this essay can give their own stories about how work, meetings, “happy hours” with friends, etc. have been impacted by COVID-19. Many have had relatives exposed and some may have had a close relative or friend die from the virus.

Nevertheless, I am optimistic about the future. Not that we will return to our pre-coronavirus way of life, but that we will learn how to meet the changes brought on by the virus. When I, and other academics my age, were undergraduate, computers were just beginning to be available to undergraduates. I typed my term papers on an electronic typewriter and was very happy if it has a correction key. I spent hours in the library searching the card catalog for books and the Readers Guide to Periodicals for journal articles that I used to write those papers. Using PowerPoint or something similar was still years in the future, as was the Internet. As I moved through my career, I had to learn all this new technology in order to do my job and keep up with younger colleagues who grew up with computers and, later, the Internet. I recall how scary it was to make my first online purchase. Would it arrive or was I a fool for sending money to a company hundreds of miles way? Now I buy most of my books, electronics, and just about everything else online, without much hesitation. When I first started teaching, I gave traditional chalk-and-talk lectures. Now I use PowerPoints, post material on Blackboard, and find articles using academic search engines from the comfort of my office. It is likely that some of you don’t even know what a card catalog is. I can get statistical output from colleagues via email and send completed manuscripts to others who are in other states or, sometimes, other countries. Having grown up with the rotary phone, I
had to learn how use this technology. My point is that everyone affected by the coronavirus will have to learn new ways of working and interacting, but that’s okay. Because if I can do it, anyone can.

As for the future of the Department, I am optimistic. Faculty will continue to learn and develop their teaching skills and research agenda, despite the coronavirus. Will the future be easy? Not likely. The Department will face continued decline in the number of undergraduates we enroll in our classes. That is inevitable, given the decline in the number of college age people living in Ohio and around the country. Faculty, and graduate student, will have to be more resourceful in how they look at their career development. Graduate students need to look at jobs outside of academics. Tenure track positions will be fewer, so they must be open to jobs in non-academic setting like non-profit organizations, medical schools, or government. A friend of mine from graduate school has had a long, rewarding career working for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. She continues to do her own research and helps evaluate grant proposals from others so that they can conduct their research. One of her research projects had her living in Geneva, Switzerland for two years. I was very jealous.

As a final thought, I am confident that faculty and staff in the Department of Sociology will continue to work so that our students, graduate and undergraduate, have the skills necessary to take advantage of these future changes. My recommendation to everyone is to learn how to adapt to change, it is the only constant, and realize that how you work 10, 20, 30 years from now will have little to do with how work and study is organized now. Be ready; it's coming.

-Richard Adams

Meet the New Graduate Students

Questions for the new cohort:
1. What is your preferred name?
2. What program are you coming from?
3. What is your area of interest in sociology?
4. What is your best memory/anecdote from a sociology class?
5. What is your favorite dessert?

Haley Crews

1. Haley
2. I just completed my B.S. at the University of Mount Union in Neuroscience and Sociology
3. I am interested in neurosociology, deviance, and social psychology.

Aimee Cockburn

1. Aimee
2. I have a Masters in Sociology (CSU) and a Masters in Humanistic Psychology (Center for Humanistic Studies) I started my PhD 20 years ago, but with kids and work was too much! So, I chose to put it aside. And now, I just feel like I need to get it done! I have been teaching Sociology and Psychology for about 10 years at a few local colleges.
3. My area of interest has always been marriage and family. In recent years, I have more interest in gender issues as well.
4. My Soc classes as a student were so long ago! But my favorite part about grad school was really the comradery. Being surrounded by
Graem Sigelmier

1. Graem Sigelmier
2. I have a B.S. in Psychology from Kent and I have been working with the ENLoK lab for the past 2 years since graduating.
3. My area of interest is in sociological social psychology and neurosociology, particularly with regard to cognition and mental processing in social environments.
4. My best memory is from Dr. Ivanka Sabolich’s Intro to Sociology course; her coursework ignited my burgeoning interest in the sociological field, and for that I am forever grateful.
5. Cheesecake from *The Cheesecake Factory*

Stella Tarnoff

1. Stella
2. I got my B.A. in Sociology at the University of Oregon.
3. My area of interest is mental health and disability.
4. One of the doctoral students in the department was studying doomsday preppers, which made for a very fun guest lecture, as well as a good reminder that sometimes the weird topics make for the most interesting research.
5. Chocolate Babka

Allan Biggins

1. You can call me Allan
2. I hail from Cleveland State University’s Department of Sociology, Criminology and Anthropology.
3. My interest is in criminology. I have an MA in Sociology and am a former police officer.
4. Giving a presentation as a class project and being so medicated on Dayquil and decongestants that I barely remember giving the presentation and people telling me afterward that I made no sense and that they were confused. I’m still laughing as I type this...still got an A.
5. Creme Brulee with orange

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Shayna Morrison

1. Shayna
2. I am a transfer Ph.D. student from an interdisciplinary Soc/Economics degree at Indiana University of PA.
3. My areas of interest are human sexuality, gender/race/class inequalities.
4. In the early 2000s, when fair trade was all the rage, we staged a student fast until the cafeteria submitted to eradicate free-trade coffee and replace it with a fair-trade option. I changed my major from Art Education to Sociology and eventually fell out of love with coffee and became a tea drinker.
5. I invented a dessert that is a pecan-flour cracker topped with goat’s milk cheese, red raspberries, a fresh sprig of mint, and dark grade honey from my apiarist friend. My father and uncle are a baker and chef respectively, and I did not get the gene. I can make this one thing that involves no baking, and they will eat it!
James Norris

1. Dusty Norris
2. Anthropology Masters at Kent State
3. Criminology & Deviance and Social Psychology
4. This will be my first one [sociology class]
5. Ice cream

Tristan Davis

1. Tristan
2. Kent State University, Bachelors in Sociology and Psychology
3. I am interested primarily in food and politics, but I have side interests in media, socialization, and subcultures
4. I am not certain that I have specific favorite memory, but overall, my favorite classes were Wealth, Poverty, and Power, and Sociology of Food
5. Mint Chocolate Chip ice cream by far!

Welcome New Cohort!
We are excited for your many successes in the program and beyond.

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Christopher Dum

Dr. Christopher Dum is a resident criminologist, associate professor, and award-winning writer here in the Sociology Department. He is also a strong advocate for currently and formerly incarcerated peoples. In 2016, Dr. Dum co-founded the ID13 Prison Literacy Project – a partnership with current incarcerated individuals at Lake Erie Correctional Institution, and Grafton Correctional Institution in response to their interests in writing and publishing poetry. In this way, this project aims to amplify incarcerated voices and connect them to the outside. We interviewed Dr. Dum to learn more about his ideas on activism, his work with ID13, and how students can get involved.

Q: What is activism to you?

Dr. Dum: “[Activism is] doing any sort of actions to help further the cause of social justice issues, specifically with the goal of improving people’s lives. You know, we all live in this world together and I think trying to improve it so people can live in it that they can is just – should be the goal of ourselves as human beings, so I think activism is sort of anything that you are doing to help those around you like in any way, shape, or form.”

“I think you only just have to look around you, right, in sort of any space to realize that there are people who are suffering from something or other. It could be something as simple as like mental health issues which are pretty out of control or something like structural inequality or, you know,
even if you think about not just people, but if you consider animal rights or the environment or something just existing that is being harmed some way or something that is not existing to its full potential in the way that it deserves.”

**Q:** How is activism important inside and outside of the academy?

**Dr. Dum:** “I think there are so many things outside the academy that you can see where the world exists in a state where things can be improved and I think that so much of what we study in sociology and obviously the criminologists— you know, criminal justice issues and imprisonment, incarceration, and sort of this legacy of so many racial inequalities – I think it’s easy in my mind to sort of see the connections inside and outside the academy in terms of all these things that need to be addressed. So, I don’t think you need to be inside the academy to address it and you certainly don’t need to limit yourself because you’re in the academy and say I can’t address these things. I think it’s sort of almost a duty that we have if we’re studying inequality in an empirical way to then say well if my findings say this, then shouldn’t people and should I do something to help change these inequalities?”

“I find it very strange that academics seem to have this like knee- jerk reaction shying away like we can’t get involved in political statements. It’s like, well, all politics is essentially deciding who gets what resources and what that does in how people live, how the earth lives, how animals live. So, I feel like it’s just naïve and stupid to be like ‘well I can’t get involved and I don’t want to, you know, take a stand if your research is going to be taking a stand. And if you’re doing something that’s important, and you’re doing it well, then you shouldn’t have any problem involving yourself in efforts to remedy whatever problem you are identifying.”

“I don’t think there’s any reason not to be involved and active. And I think that as sociologists, especially given what we study, it’s vitally important to be involved in what we do otherwise we’re running this risk of getting very disconnected and contributing more to this ivory tower BS which I don’t think helps anybody.”

**Q:** When thinking about activism and different actions, do you think different actions (on individual vs. structural levels) are more important or effective than others?

**Dr. Dum:** “I think there are long-game and short-term impacts. I mean, obviously if you’re talking about huge structural changes, you know, it could be lifetimes or years or decades before things happen. But then at the same time, you can do things like Food Not Bombs and literally go out and feed people who don’t have food tomorrow or today. Like you could get off the phone and go do that today, right? And to say changing that’s less important and something else is more important—who’s to say really, right? I think it’s really hard sort of to say more important because then you’re talking about some sort of quantification and I think that’s grew up- I went to a Unitarian church when I was a kid and at that church a lot of people were involved in protests and things like that. Like, I remember one of my ministers got arrested protesting the School of Americas. So, to me, part of growing up, taking a stand and getting involved in sort of, you know, working against injustices is always something that’s been very integral just to life and existence. So, it’s not something I wanted to turn off when I got here and the more I’m here, I’m like ‘well yeah, we shouldn’t be.’”

**Q:** Have you always felt this way about activism, or is it something you developed as a grad student and then as a faculty member?

**Dr. Dum:** “I think I’ve been pretty attuned to, and fortunately with my upbringing, to the power that individual people can have to do certain things to take action. I grew up- I went to a Unitarian church when I was a kid and at that church a lot of people were involved in protests and things like that. Like, I remember one of my ministers got arrested protesting the School of Americas. So, to me, part of growing up, taking a stand and getting involved in sort of, you know, working against injustices is always something that’s been very integral just to life and existence. So, it’s not something I wanted to turn off when I got here and the more I’m here, I’m like ‘well yeah, we shouldn’t be.’”

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really hard and I don’t think the issues… there are so many issues and so many people in the world and the earth and animals and stuff… there are so many things that need attention that I don’t think it’s my place to quantify that, especially when there are people experiencing real suffering. So, I don’t think it’s my place to tell people necessarily ‘you should be doing this instead.’ You should be doing something, right? And to the extent that what you are doing is helping people, then that I think is important. But at the same time, if someone is feeling disenchanted like ‘oh this thing I really care about is going to take forever to change’ then you can go out and if you want to have a tangible effect tomorrow, there are definitely things you can do to do that.”

Q: Can you tell me about your recent activism with ID13?

**Dr. Dum:** I have been very involved with working with incarcerated individuals and trying to amplify their creative voices. The incarceration system penalizes so many people, especially minorities, and there is an incredible stigma attached to criminal records and criminal histories when they come out of prison. I just think we have this duty to try to alleviate that and to try to give people inside a voice to speak to the outside, especially when they have so many talents that can be cultivated and exist in awesome ways. So, I’ve been involved with leading writing groups inside various prisons like Lake Erie Correctional Institution, like Grafton Correctional with the ultimate goal of really just trying to collect as many stories and pieces and works from them and then share with the public. So, we’ve been working with Lake Erie since 2016 and Grafton since 2019 and we actually just released a chapbook with federal writers at FCI Elkton which is the only federal prison in Ohio. So, we were able to get that out. So yeah, our view is that there are people in these situations and they reached out to us and were like ‘we would like the opportunity to write and publish and things like that’ and I just kind of viewed it like ‘okay, I serve at the pleasure of you. You want us to be here, so what can we do to help you?’ And I think that is, in a way, an ideal partnership. I’m not there to tell them how to do things unless they want some advice. Basically, everything is based on ‘what do you want us to help you accomplish? What can we bring to you?’ and then that’s our goal.”

“The goal of my activism is, okay, how can we focus attention on the individuals, on the talents they bring, what they offer us to think about the world? And then by exposing people to that, how can it change people’s opinions about how we think about prisons and how these prisons treat people. Is prison just about punishment, in general, in this society? So yeah, you know, we have these systems that are affecting people, so let’s go straight to the source and work with the people affected by this issue in hopes of 1) sharing their experiences and 2) drawing more public attention in hopes of changing policy. And if it doesn’t change policy, the fact that some of these people were able to have their stories shared is a win in and of itself.”

Q: How can students get involved?

**Dr. Dum:** “Right now, we can only send writing prompts in through email and they can message us. Hopefully we can do some more video work as soon as they’re allowed to congregate in a space that would allow them to do that. The chapbook with FCI Elkton was actually pre-COVID and we were able to do it essentially all through email and snail mail. The guys would send us stuff and we’d print it out and write comments and mail it back and they’d send it back. We never actually went into Elkton and we were able to put that chapbook together and you can download that from the website right now. So, we’re trying to adjust. We were going into prison every week every other week, so that was a huge part of what I was doing.”

“The FCI Elkton chapbook actually- so, the guys would send
us pieces and we’d review them. So, we had a bunch of students from the Honors fraternity, I think like seven or eight, actually do the review and write comments. So, they were involved with reading work, commenting, sending it back. And the guys inside loved that. So yeah, essentially, we can bring people in, almost anyone can visit a few times if they want to be involved. Often, they’ve never been to a prison before and they’d just like some experience talking to people in prison or getting involved, they don’t have to visit. There are things people can get involved in on the outside, as well. So yeah, as soon as things sort of pick up, there are definitely options for people to come visit or to be involved in other ways whether it be helping create chapbooks or things like that or helping with the website or looking for new opportunities or things like that. We do a lot of public readings when we can actually go out and socially distance. Doing those sorts of readings to the public is something that’s really powerful and we try to do, so people are definitely welcome to get involved with that or to put on readings or to join us in and read pieces by the guys who are inside.”

“Guys are always looking for feedback on their writing, so if undergrads would like to be involved and read any work and send some comments to the guys, they would really enjoy that. It always helps to create connections and things like that. The guys are always looking for feedback on projects. So, if they want to be involved in that, that would be terrific. Even some simple things like helping share the website and things like that is really a simple and effective way of getting involved- just spreading through word of mouth. We just partnered up with a small press called Bleakhouse Publishing to publish a book by one of our writers called “Behind These Fences.” He goes by the initials E.L. That’s for sale on Amazon and should be shipping in September. Just a collection of poetry, but it’s really awesome. This guy is a tremendous writer. If people want to buy a copy of that and help support Bleakhouse and spread his words out there, that would be awesome.”

If you would like to get involved in any way, feel free to reach out to Dr. Dum via email at cdum@kent.edu or check out the ID13 website at id13project.com!

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**Graduate Mentoring Program: Jess Cebulak, Mentoring Committee**

![Jess Cebulak](image)

The Kent State Sociology Department Graduate Mentoring Program began in Fall 2015 when it was created by graduate student Brennan Miller. Since then, the program has been officially integrated into the department, with a new graduate student volunteering each year to run the mentor committee. Through the mentor program, more senior level graduate student volunteers get matched with each incoming member of the new year’s cohort. Initial matches are made based on having similar academic interests.

The goal of the program is to have mentors guide mentees in their first year and beyond, both personally and professionally. Since its implementation, the mentor program has been a great success. Mentees from our very first year have now served as mentors themselves.

This year, we have a large and exciting cohort of eight new graduate students that are to be
matched with our sixth generation of mentor volunteers. After matches are made, the mentor-mentee group usually comes together for an initial meet-and-greet. After that event, mentor-mentee matches continue to develop their professional relationship, with periodic check-ins to the group from the current committee chair. This year, our mentor program will mainly operate virtually. Our first meet-and-greet will be happening in the first weeks of the semester through a video chat session.

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**I wish I had known then… Advice from other Graduate Students**

**Tierra James**
Some of the best advice that I can give to new graduate students is: Do not procrastinate! Grad school is not like undergrad where things can be left to the last few days to complete. In order to do the best on assignments we need time to think things out and develop our goals. This is a piece of advice that I did not adhere to during my first year of grad school, and I paid for it with sleepless nights working on class assignments. I have never been the type of person that planned things out, but I found that as I progressed through the program it became easier for me to plan ahead for assignments and projects. I began to create a schedule for each month that detailed due dates and set times for studying for each class. I recommend that new students also keep to a schedule in order to stay on top of all of the things grad school has to offer. If anyone needs any advice on how to set planners for the semester, please let me know!

**Chloe Miller**
If you’re having trouble getting something done, set a timer. For example, if you’re trying to write a draft and are feeling stuck or having trouble focusing, divide it up into paragraphs or sections and give yourself 10 minutes for each. It’s harder to let yourself waste time when you have a deadline right in front of you, and you can (and should) always go back and add to what you wrote in those 10 minutes. When the time is up, move on to the next section and restart the timer. You’ll get more done that way than if you stare at the page for an hour trying to make it perfect the first time.

**Kayla Cagwin**
Figure out when you do your best work. I was definitely guilty of burning the midnight oil when I started grad school, which ultimately led to exhaustion, burn out, and not my best writing. I figured out late in the game that I am a morning writer and that I produce better work with less stress if I shift my schedule to write first thing in the morning. You have to figure out what works well for you and stick to it.

**Maddy Steward**
Ask for help. You’re not alone in this experience and the goal of the rest of the department is not to watch you fail. We want to help you with whatever you need help with!

**Leslie Wood**
The only stupid questions are the ones you do not ask. Do not be afraid or ashamed to ask for help, that is what we are here for.

**Tiah Wingate**
As much as you want to pour 100% of yourself into your new grad student identity in order to be successful, be sure to still invest ample time within those other identities that are important to
you...especially those involving your close relationships. This will help you weather those stressful times of the semester much more successfully!

**Brandon Ehlinger**

Don’t suffer in silence. You are in a department full of professors and students who sincerely want to see you succeed, so never hesitate to ask questions about things in the classroom, the department, the community, etc. and be proactive with the maintenance of your mental and physical health.

**Jon Overton**

Figure out what really matters and what only matters a little bit. For the things that matter a little bit, do well enough, feel free to have some fun with it, but don’t put your heart and soul into it. Channel your inner ‘overachiever’ into the things that *really* matter. Whoever you are, whatever your goals are, your methods courses *really* matter.

**Michelle Fretwell**

Before coming to grad school, I was told that the first year was the most brutal. As a mere second year student, I can neither confirm nor dispute. However, what I can say is that it was difficult in ways I could never have expected. With that in mind, here are some words that I was told and some that I might have liked to hear: Don’t be afraid to reach out to people. You are smart enough to be in this program. You are welcome here. If, for any reason, it doesn’t feel like you are supported, try to surround yourself with people who do support you. This transition is uncomfortable, but the discomfort is temporary. You being here is ultimately about you – you’re chasing a dream, pursuing a passion, following a path. Whatever you feel you are doing here, be patient, trust the process, but also make it your own and do your best. Though it is easy, do not compare yourself to others. You are here to gain knowledge and skills for you to then use in whatever way you want to contribute to this world.

Good luck to you all, and don’t hesitate to reach out!

**Amelia Davies Robinson**

Get to know your cohort and other graduate students. Grad school is a marathon and a support system who understands what you are going through. is worth its weight in gold. While perseverance plays a part in success, but so does having people who you can rely on.

**Cynthia Hunt**

Find time for yourself. The first year can seem overwhelming, and while it will be an adjustment, especially under these conditions, finding a balance between time for school/work and things you enjoy doing is crucial. Take time for yourself and give yourself a break when you need one.

**Jess Fleck, Erin Andro, & Dan Burrill**

Use a citation manager from the beginning of grad school. This helps a lot when you move on to your thesis, comp paper, and dissertation. Free ones like Zotero are great and free!
AKD Events for Fall 2020

September
Virtual Happy Hour – Friday, September 11th at 6 pm
Get together with fellow grad student. Meet the new cohort & see old friends!

October
NAMI Walk – Saturday, October 10th
Join Dr. Gallagher’s Team! Walk where and when works for you, with others or solo.

Virtual Movie Night – Friday, October 23rd at 6 pm
Join AKD for a Spooktacular Movie!

November
Virtual Happy Hour – Friday, November 13th at 6pm
Grad student get together!

December
Silent Auction – Friday, December 4th
Fundraiser for our Spring Banquet! Find some neat items and support AKD.

Virtual Movie Night – Saturday, December 19th at 6pm
Join us for some festive fun to celebrate the end of the semester!
AKD 2020 T-Shirt
Please detach and turn in to Amelia Davies Robinson with payment!
(Use Mailbox or Merrill 231A)
The NAMI Virtual Walk is Saturday, October 10th

☑ Orders must be placed by 25 September 2020
☑ Cash or check (made payable to Sociology Honor Society)
☑ Contact Amelia Davies Robinson, adaviesr@kent.edu, with any questions

Name: ________________________________

Email: ________________________________

- An email will be sent to announce when the t-shirts are ready for pick-up, at Amelia or Courtney’s cubicles in Merrill 231.

Sizes/Prices: Please indicate number of t shirts. Kids sizes available upon request!

$15 / t-shirt  _____ S  _____ M  _____ L  _____ XL  _____ XXL  _____ XXXL

Total Payment ________________