

# WE ARE BOWEN HALL



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Mississippi State University provides academic, leadership and social opportunities to help each person excel. Discover a lifetime of integrated research, service and teaching experiences with the Department of Sociology.





## MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM DEPARTMENT HEAD

Adele Crudden

The Sociology department, including the criminology and social work programs, includes a diverse faculty exploring multiple independent and overlapping social issues and providing instruction to an array of talented graduate and undergraduate students.

**Please explore this newsletter to learn about the projects, awards, and research activities keeping us all busy. We invite students considering majors in sociology, criminology, or social work to follow up by visiting with us and exploring how degrees in these disciplines can channel career paths. It is great work – please be a part of it.**

In the upcoming academic year, please welcome our new department head, Dr. Nicole Rader, as she moves from her position as associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and Sanna King, who will join our faculty. Please join me in

saying farewell and best wishes to Dr. Melinda Pilkinton, Social Work Program Director, as she retires from the University. Many thanks to the faculty who served on search committees and to those who will take the lead in searching for a new social work faculty member.

The professional skills and abilities of the departmental faculty and staff are only surpassed by their cooperative and collaborative spirit. As I conclude my stint as interim department head, I am most appreciative for all who assisted in maintaining an atmosphere of collegiality and productivity. Many faculty and staff assumed new roles or took on interim roles this past year. Others helped behind the scenes to keep things moving forward. I was consistently impressed by our ability to work together for the common good of the department and the University. I turn the reins over to Dr. Rader knowing that she is moving into a strong, productive, and unified department. The department will continue to move forward, and you are invited to move ahead with us.



# WELCOME NICOLE RADER, NEW DEPARTMENT HEAD, JULY 2019



**D**r. Nicole Rader, current associate dean for academic affairs in the College of Arts and Sciences, will take the reins July 1, 2019, as head of the Department of Sociology. In her new role, Rader will oversee the management and sustained growth of the department.

Rader joined the faculty at Mississippi State University in 2005 as the undergraduate and graduate coordinator for the Department of Sociology. She led the university's Gender Studies program and chaired the campus President's Commission on the Status of Women. In 2016, she was named interim associate dean for academic affairs in the university's College of Arts and Sciences. After a year serving as interim, she was named dean in 2017.

Her progressive leadership roles have provided a solid foundation for and deeper understanding of the challenges faced in both an academic and administrative environment.

**“Dr. Rader brings leadership and knowledge that will guide our department toward continued success,” said Adele Crudden, professor and interim department head. “She has a proven record of research and service in the Department of Sociology, and we are delighted to welcome her back.”**

Rader holds a Bachelor of Arts in criminal justice and a Women's Studies Certificate from Central Methodist University, a Master of Arts in criminology from Drury University, and a Doctor of Philosophy in sociology from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. As a researcher, she focuses on criminology, gender, and qualitative methods, and her current research examines gender and crime issues, specifically investigating fear of crime, sexual victimization, and the influence of the media. She teaches both undergraduate and graduate students in the areas of criminology, stratification and methods.

Her works have been published in a variety of sociological and criminological outlets, including recent work in *Feminist Criminology*, *Women & Criminal Justice*, *Sociological Focus*, and *Criminal Justice Review*. She was awarded the Dean's Eminent Scholar for the College of Arts and Sciences in 2015, and her co-authored book *Fear of Crime in the United States: Causes, Consequences, and Contradictions* (Carolina Academic Press) won a CHOICE Award in 2015.

Rader has been recognized for her many contributions to MSU, receiving a Distinguished Faculty Award from Alpha Kappa Delta sociology honor society (2013), the President's Commission on the Status of Women's Outstanding Faculty Member Award (2012), the College of Arts and Sciences Kari and Phil Oldham Mentor of the Year Award (2012), and the college's Teacher of the Year in the Social and Behavioral Sciences (2012).

## WE ARE BOWEN HALL

Founded in 1947, the Department of Sociology is one of the oldest and largest departments in the College of Arts and Sciences. The department offers degree programs in sociology, criminology, and social work, and an M.S. and Ph.D. in sociology.



## FACULTY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Rachel Allison

Raymond Barranco

Robert Boyd

Dustin Brown

Kenya Cistrunk

Adele Crudden

Maggie Hagerman

Stacy Haynes

Jada Johnson

Kecia Johnson

Kimberly Kelly

Veronica Knowles

Braden Leap

David May

Mehrzad Netadj

Ashley Perry

Lindsey Peterson

Melinda Pilkinton

Margaret Ralston

Tara Sutton

Diego Thompson

Ashley Vancil-Leap

## SOCIOLOGY STAFF

Mary Ann Dean

Paula Jones

Jeanett Mallett

# FACULTY BOOK SIGNING

Three sociology faculty members at Mississippi State University published books in 2018, exploring challenges and opportunities regarding gender issues, racial inequality and community adaptations.

On Jan. 12, 2019, MSU's College of Arts and Sciences hosted a book signing at the on-campus Barnes & Noble to celebrate the achievements of assistant professors Rachel Allison, Margaret A. Hagerman and Braden Leap.

They met with the public to sign and answer questions about their research and newly published books.

Sociology department head Adele Crudden said the books are "just one way that our faculty respond to emerging social concerns," and the department was pleased to offer the community an opportunity to meet the authors and learn more about their work.

"The sociology department is fortunate to have incredibly talented faculty as evidenced by the recent publication of three books addressing important and timely topics—climate change, racial inequality and gender issues in sports," Crudden said.

Allison's book, *Kicking Center: Gender and the Selling of Women's Professional Soccer*, is a 200-page work published by Rutgers University Press that analyzes the challenges and opportunities for a women's soccer league breaking into the male-dominated center of U.S. professional sport. Allison's work examines how those working with and for the sport address these challenges in selling and marketing their league.



Hagerman's book, *White Kids: Growing Up with Privilege in a Racially Divided America*, is a 280-page, research-based volume published by New York University Press. Over a two-year period, Hagerman conducted observations and in-depth interviews with affluent white children and their families to understand how they make sense of privilege, unequal educational opportunities and police violence. Based on these dialogues, Hagerman's work provides a detailed examination of the role that children and families play in the reproduction of racism and racial inequality in America.

Leap's book, *Gone Goose*, a 256-page manuscript published by Temple University Press, examines how Sumner, Missouri, residents adapted as shifting climatological conditions eliminated more than 100,000 geese from their traditional wintering ground in the local community. Near the Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Missouri, shifting climates and changes in land-use forced the geese to relocate from what residents had proclaimed to be the "wild goose capital of the world." Leap's book explores how losing the geese created a new and unfamiliar landscape for the residents of Sumner.

During the two-hour book signing, approximately 30 books were sold and more than 100 people came to visit with the authors. The College of Arts and Sciences is supportive of Allison, Hagerman and Leap's work and is excited for their future research endeavors.

# Q&A WITH MARGARET HAGERMAN, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY



When preparing to publish your book *White Kids: Growing Up with Privilege in a Racially Divided America* (New York University Press, September 2018), did you think it would gain so much national press?

*A: No, I definitely did not think it would gain the attention that it has. I thought perhaps a few sociologists or family scholars might read it, and I certainly hoped that readers outside of the academic world—especially parents—would come across it, but I had no idea that it would receive the national and international press that it has since its release.*

What is your emotional reaction to receiving this attention?

*A: It has been both exhilarating and exhausting, to be honest. Over the past few months, I have done more than 50 interviews with radio stations, podcasts, newspapers, magazines and other journalists. I am giving talks across the country at universities, K-12 schools, with parent groups and book clubs, and with nonprofits working for racial justice. More than anything though, I feel grateful for the opportunity to share my scholarship with people who work with kids—and who want to help young people learn to challenge rather than reinforce racism.*

What challenges do you face through talking with national press about your book?

*A: Most journalists and radio hosts are very respectful and curious about my research. Certainly, I try to be thoughtful and strategic about answering their questions, and I spend a lot of time preparing answers that are clear and concise. Some radio stations have live call-ins, which means you never know what kinds of questions you will get. Another challenge is fitting all of this public engagement into my otherwise busy schedule. I spend a lot of early Saturday mornings and late evenings in my office doing interviews with people across the country or catching up on my other responsibilities. Another challenge is dealing with hateful messages from white nationalists, but I try*

*to focus on the many, many more positive messages I receive from people who have heard me on the radio or who have read about my work.*

How have you responded to individuals who have rejected the main points found in your research and explained throughout your book?

*A: One of my main points is that all children are worthy of consideration in our society. Apparently, this is a very controversial point. And while I am open to respectful and constructive critique about my research, most of the pushback I have received has taken the form of threats of violence or otherwise nasty messages directed at me personally. I try to ignore these disrespectful and hateful responses as much as I can. I am grateful that the department, college and university have been supportive of me and my academic scholarship.*

Explain some of your experiences speaking with various media outlets.

*A: I have had the opportunity to speak with several different international, national and local media outlets. I have been on the radio in Canada and have been interviewed by a reporter for the London publication of *The Guardian* and by a French reporter for *Libération*, a newspaper in Paris. (I still do not know what the article she wrote says because it is written in French!) I have also been interviewed by a number of NPR affiliates across the country. I have been interviewed by organizations I really admire that host podcasts and webinars, like *Integrated Schools* and *EmbraceRace*. And, I have been invited to write op-eds and essays for publications like *Time*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Conversation* and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*.*

Where have you traveled to promote your book?

*A: Since the book has come out, I have been invited to speak about my research at Wayne State University, University of*



*Nevada Las Vegas, University of Illinois at Chicago, Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis, University of Missouri, University of Southern Mississippi, Western Carolina University and the University of Minnesota. I have future visits planned to Cornell University, University of Georgia and the Ohio State University. I have skyped into sociology classes at Pitzer College, Florida Gulf Coast University, Lehigh University and Bucknell University. I also am traveling to St. Louis, Houston and Minneapolis this year to meet with K-12 schools/students and nonprofits—it's been a bit hectic!*

Regarding the marketing of your book, please explain the affiliation you have built with the National Public Radio.

*A: I have been interviewed by NPR affiliates in places like Detroit, New York City, Kansas City, Madison, Minneapolis, Dallas and Jackson. I think I was most excited to do an interview with Kai Ryssdal from NPR's Marketplace. When I first heard his voice, I was in awe and for some reason, I could not stop coughing, which was pretty embarrassing. Fortunately, that interview was pre-recorded, so they edited that part out. Another highlight of NPR interviews is Mississippi State alumni periodically hear me and send me encouraging emails, which always makes my day.*

Do you have any favorite stories regarding the press surrounding your book?

*A: The most terrifying experience was going on television as part of the Wisconsin Book Festival. It was CSPAN-2, but it was certainly the closest I have ever been to being on live television! As I sat with my husband in the green room before I walked out onto the stage, I asked the assistant what he would do if I threw up on live television. I was (mostly) kidding, but the assistant looked alarmed! Fortunately, that did not happen—and actually, the experience was really positive. In addition, I think my favorite radio interview was with Julie Rose at Sirius XM Radio/BYU Radio—she crafted a narrative over the hour that we spoke and even asked me to read from the book. It was clear that she had read and thought about my research, which made the interview far better. She was so smart and thoughtful, and I now listen to her radio program when I can.*

What was your goal with writing this book?

*A: My primary goal was to write a book about the role that white kids and their families play in the reproduction of racial inequality in America, often when they do not intend to do so—but to write it in a way that would be both intellectually rigorous and accessible to people who are not sociologists or academics.*

What has been the greatest benefit from receiving so much public attention?

*A: I think the greatest benefit to me personally is that I now believe that it is possible for our research to have an impact on the choices that individual people make and how people see the world. Honestly, I always feared that my work might be pointless in terms of actually challenging inequality. But I have had so many conversations recently with affluent, white parents who have told me that my book has influenced them, that they are thinking critically in new ways about their own complicity with white supremacy, and that they want to make different parenting choices moving forward. I hope they do.*

Do you think you will ever conduct follow-up research in order to write a sequel to this book?

*A: Initially, I had planned to re-interview the participants in my study when they were in college—I had interviewed them in middle school and in high school, so I thought that might be interesting. However, since the book has come out, many of the young people have read the book; at this point, I'm not sure it makes sense to move in this direction.*

What are your plans for your next research project?

*A: I am currently conducting new research with kids in Mississippi and Massachusetts. I am trying to explore how kids are thinking about racism in America in the post-Obama era and how place might shape their racial and political socialization processes. I am really excited about this work so far, especially because it has allowed me to work with some of our outstanding graduate students here at Mississippi State!*



## CRUDDEN NAMED MISSISSIPPI SOCIAL WORKER OF THE YEAR

Adele Crudden, MSU Department of Sociology professor and interim department head, is the 2019 Social Worker of the Year for Mississippi's chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. She received the award at the association's annual conference for demonstrating outstanding leadership and contributing to a positive image for the social work profession.

Humble in her recognition, Crudden said, "I share this award with my MSU social work colleagues and the social work students, who inspire and support me."

Crudden was nominated by former colleague Leigh Jensen-Crawford, who retired as director of MSU's Student Counseling Services in 2016. Jensen-Crawford describes Crudden as someone who "embodies social work." Crudden's application stood out due to her ongoing dedication to research, service and education.

"Dr. Crudden has consistently been a community advocate for marginalized populations, including LGBTQ and those in poverty, and supports many social justice issues," said Janice Sandefur, executive director of Mississippi's chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. "As a professional social worker, educator and advocate, Dr. Crudden was the clear choice to represent the profession

as the Social Worker of the Year."

Since joining the MSU faculty in 1994, Crudden has secured more than \$11 million in federally funded research through the university's National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision. She also is a former director of the Addie McBryde



Rehabilitation Center for the Blind in Jackson. Crudden is a Mississippi Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) and Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and nationally Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC).

Crudden's professional experience includes working with individuals who have developmental disabilities, chronic health conditions and physical disabilities. Her research interests include disability, gerontology, job retention among persons with disabilities, women's issues and health care.

Founded in 1955, NASW promotes, develops and protects the practice of social work and social workers and seeks to enhance the well-being of individuals, families and communities through its advocacy. Based in Washington, D.C., NASW is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world, with more than 120,000 members.







# IL THE GLASS IS L: SPORTS, GENDER QUALITY, AND 5,000 GRANT

A lot can change in five years. In 2014, Rachel Allison, a current Mississippi State University faculty member, graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago with a Ph.D. in sociology. In that same year, she moved from big-city Chicago to small-town Starkville to begin working as an assistant professor of sociology and initiate her personal and collaborative research efforts.

As a child, Allison enjoyed playing soccer. Her passion for the sport began at seven years old and continued through her undergraduate years at Grinnell College where she studied sociology and French.

“I became interested in sociology as a way to better understand my own life experiences and put them into historical and cultural context,” Allison said. “Sociology helped me understand the role that sports had played in my life and led me to ask bigger questions about the status of women in sports and how it has changed over time.”

Through sociology, Allison was able to connect her personal passion for soccer with her professional research. Since 2010, Allison’s primary research focus has been on women’s professional sports in the U.S. Through her research, Allison examines the challenges women’s sports teams and leagues face and how those issues are addressed. Overall, she has a strong desire to



“understand how, where and why gender inequality persists in sports.”

To assist in eliminating gender inequality, Allison published her book, “Kicking Center: Gender and the Selling of Women’s Professional Soccer,” on Aug. 30, 2018. Connected to Allison’s research, her publication analyzes the challenges and opportunities women’s soccer leagues face in the male-dominated professional sport of soccer.

In addition to previous research grants, Allison was awarded the Fédération Internationale de Football Association research scholarship on Jan. 15, 2019, which will fund her upcoming study, “Women’s World Cup Fandom: Identities, Expressions, and Communities.” Valued at \$15,000, Allison said the research will be an interview and observational study of fans attending the 2019 Women’s World Cup in France. Upon completing her research, Allison plans to write a report explaining the “new information about how fandom develops and is expressed

in women’s soccer, how fandom is expressed in face-to-face versus online settings, and whether or how fandom of the Women’s World Cup translates into fandom of local and regional women’s soccer teams.”

In 2018, Allison received the College of Arts and Sciences Research Award for Social and Behavioral Sciences, and the Early Career Gender Scholar Award from Sociologists for Women in Society-South. Allison said she hopes her upcoming research sparks new conversations about gender in sports, eventually influencing those in positions of power and authority to make changes promoting gender equality in sports.

“Essentially, the glass is half full—women in sports have gained opportunities, resources and status over time, but there is still a long way to go,” Allison said. She is prepared and willing to continue to use her research and her voice to advocate for gender equality until the glass favoring women is completely full.





# MSU FACULTY CREATE RELATIONSHIPS, PARTNERSHIPS TO COMBAT FOOD INSECURITY

Opening the pantry and finding food is not a significant difficulty for a majority of Mississippians, yet for 22% of the state's citizens, the cupboard is bare.

Well over the national average of 14 %, Mississippi's rate of "food insecurity" is the highest in the nation. As defined by the United States Department of Agriculture, food security is "access by all people at all times to have enough food for an active, healthy life." Food insecurity, on the flipside, is "a lack of access to enough food to be healthy and active," and indicates homes with disrupted eating patterns.

What happens when people are hungry and there is no food in the cupboard—

and no likelihood of having food any time soon? Current studies at MSU show food insecure individuals have higher health care costs, greater likelihood of heart disease, diabetes, increased rates of mortality, higher blood pressure and many other health concerns (Hossfeld, Kelly, Smith Waity, 2015).

For faculty members in MSU's Department of Sociology, career backgrounds in poverty-related research—which placed the "devastating effects" of poverty at their doorsteps—fueled a desire to help solve the hunger problem, leading to the 2015 formation of the Mississippi Food Insecurity Project (MFIP) "to

document and examine food access and food insecurity in the state of Mississippi."

Led by assistant professors Kenya Cistrunk and Kecia Johnson, both co-directors and co-principal investigators of MFIP, the team researches the effects of food insecurity and provides solutions for the urgent needs of many Mississippians.

Throughout her career as a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW), Cistrunk said she has seen firsthand the effects of poverty and how individuals and families struggle to make ends meet. "As a researcher, my hope is to make life better for that segment of the population, those living in the margins

of our society,” she explained. “Food security research allows me to unpack the issues facing citizens who do not have access to healthy, affordable food options throughout our state.”

Cistrunk said MSU President Mark E. Keenum’s appointment by President Donald J. Trump as chairman of the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD) indicates Keenum “is working at a high level to address food insecurity from a global perspective. His appointment allows us [at MSU] a space at the table.”

Cistrunk also said the work of MSU’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences is “focusing on how to address the needs of everyone, production, and all of the quality issues.”

Work done by the College of Arts and Sciences faculty, Cistrunk remarked, is focused on implementation and collaboration with researchers and community members through MFIP to address food insecurity.

“We are focused on community engagement—how do we get people engaged and mobilized to creatively and systematically address their issues,” Cistrunk said. “Our goal is not to fix, but to find sustainable ways to address the problem, so when we are gone, [the communities we help] continue to thrive.”

“It takes a lot of building of relationships,” affirmed Laura Jean Kerr, a sociology doctoral candidate deeply invested in MFIP. “Our goal is to partner with whoever is there but not take it over.” Many times, partnering organizations simply need an evaluation to secure funding. “That’s our role—community engagement and research and evaluation,” she said.

MFIP’s inaugural research project involved interviews with food pantry

providers and volunteers to determine their needs. “That research led us to write a paper about how we—MFIP—can help, getting the lay of the land, and convey what food pantry volunteers need to serve their patrons. It was our first introduction into what is going on in the state,” Johnson explained.

*“We are focused on community engagement—how do we get people engaged and mobilized to creatively and systematically address their issues. Our goal is not to fix, but to find sustainable ways to address the problem, so when we are gone, [the communities we help] continue to thrive.”*  
~ Kenya Cistrunk

Stakeholders “on the ground” are critical to the success of MFIP, according to Cistrunk. With the Mississippi Food Network already entrenched in food insecure areas of the state, MFIP is able to partner with and provide support to groups already invested in communities, including groups such as the Delta Fresh Foods Initiative and Bolivar County Good Food Revolution, a partnership secured through Leslie Hossfeld, MFIP founder and former MSU sociology department head.

Part of partnering with, but not taking over, means MFIP works with local volunteers, training and equipping them for the tasks to help their own communities.

Cistrunk advised that researchers have to be committed to “getting involved

in the community,” building trust to improve the situation. “This is work that has to be done inside the community,” she said.

“We trained 23 older youth to go out in three towns in north Bolivar County—Mound Bayou, Shelby and Winstonville. The youth went out and talked with community members, asking about access to food and what they were hoping for,” Kerr said.

Johnson explained the locals felt more comfortable talking with volunteers from their own community. “We trained the youth in the area to conduct the interviews and act as our ambassadors, but they also were escorted around the community by other community volunteers, which helped provide a sense of comfort when talking with different households about their food struggles,” she said.

“Our role was getting a sense of what the community members desired and how to best support local food providers in those areas,” Kerr added.

“The community developing their solution for their residents based on what they want is our goal,” Johnson said, noting MFIP’s relationships with local volunteers gets them “invited into more homes” and able to assess food needs.

The Bolivar County Good Food Revolution works with local farmers, getting locally grown food included in a mobile market that accepts participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. Coordinating with local farmers to provide locally grown food at SNAP-accessible venues is “an example of the community creating its solution for residents based upon the needs of the community,” Johnson said.

Cistrunk added that MFIP research





Keenum

also suggests a link between food insecurity and health problems because parents often forego medicine to purchase food for their children. “In many cases, parents are sacrificing their food, so their kids can eat,” she said. “Those parents are then at risk for health problems, especially if they have chronic health issues with illnesses like diabetes and are sacrificing purchasing their insulin medicines to save money to buy food for their kids.”

Kerr said when people eat on a limited budget, “you see more foods that aren’t nutrient rich.” In a “food desert”—an area without access to a grocery store or fresh foods within one mile in an urban area and 10 miles for a rural area—people tend to buy their food at quick markets, such as gas stations or dollar stores. These locations offer a variety of snack foods, but few fresh or healthy food options. Kerr said such food items do not promote growth and can contribute to an increase in health issues.

“Typically, children who are living with food insecurity are more likely to be absent from school, exhibit emotional problems and behavioral problems, and are more at risk for depression or

suicide, which places them at risk of dropping out of high school or higher education,” Kerr explained. “That leads to the inability to get the degrees they need to get good jobs.”

“Every individual who is food insecure has trouble focusing,” she said.

Locally, sociology colleague Diego Thompson is the director of the Oktibbeha Food Policy Council, which meets monthly. In collaboration with the MSU Extension Service, the group seeks to utilize locally grown foods to address food insecurity in the area.

“Partnering with MSU Extension was a way for the farmers to see they had something to work with,” Cistrunk said. “We are ready to map the food environment—a research-based chart showing areas of food insecurity—in Oktibbeha County because again, when the community has input, it has buy-in.”

“We believe our work can make a difference here,” Cistrunk affirmed. “It’s not just researchers in ivory towers, but people on the ground ready and able to help.”

Cistrunk said her group uses a food environment map to push forward with



solutions and utilize resources in the area combined with resources MFIP has available.

While MFIP is actively addressing food insecurity in Mississippi, Cistrunk, Johnson and Kerr said volunteers across the state can help ease the food burden for struggling families.

According to Kerr, the power of one person’s ability to affect change should not be underestimated. “I believe that Mississippi is a lovely and hope-filled place. I don’t believe our ranking in terms of health, poverty and education are a good reflection of the people who live in our borders, and I want to do what I can to support Mississippians—even perhaps change some of those numbers or rankings, so other people can see the good in Mississippi, too,” Kerr said.

Interested individuals also can contact the Maroon Volunteer Center to find opportunities to help. For a list of food pantries or to seek volunteer opportunities, visit [www.mvc.msstate.edu](http://www.mvc.msstate.edu). For more information concerning the research that has been conducted by MFIP across the state, visit [mfip.msstate.edu](http://mfip.msstate.edu).



## HALTING FOOD INSECURITY IN MISSISSIPPI

Famous for its music, mighty river and magnificent agriculture, Mississippi has another less glamorous “claim to fame” – the state with the highest rate of food insecurity. According to [feedingamerica.org](http://feedingamerica.org), more than 600,000 people in the state were food insecure in 2016. In a handful of counties, the food insecurity rate exceeds 30%.

Sociologists in Mississippi State University’s Department of Sociology are working to understand and aid the contradictory problem of being a state rich in agriculture yet having large numbers of residents with limited access to food.

Diego Thompson, a Uruguay native and assistant professor in MSU’s sociology department, has been actively involved

in the study of food insecurity throughout Mississippi—particularly in Oktibbeha County—where he focuses heavily on “governance, participation and social integration of historically disadvantaged groups in local food systems.”

Thompson is working with migrant farmworkers and limited resource farmers in Mississippi. Additionally, he is studying how rural communities in Uruguay and the U.S. perceive and respond to environmental challenges created by human development and/or climate change.

Thompson said Mississippi has a paradoxical nature regarding food security. “Right now, we find places that are really rich in terms of agriculture, like the Mississippi Delta for example,

but have high food insecurity rates and people without access to fresh and healthy food,” he said.

To combat this issue, many organizations have formed to ensure food insecure Mississippians are able to obtain nutritious meals. The Mississippi Food Policy Council and the Oktibbeha Food Policy Council are two collaborative initiatives in which Thompson is heavily involved.

The Mississippi Food Policy Council works to “educate Mississippians about food and farm policies that build healthy communities and strengthen local food systems.” Thompson said the Mississippi Food Policy Council, among other things, aims “to develop more food policy councils or more community-based



initiatives to improve local food systems.”

The Oktibbeha Food Policy Council was created for the same reason, but operates independently to fulfill its tri-fold mission to “increase food access, promote economic development, and create healthy community members,” especially among low-income residents and limited resource farmers.

Thompson said food policy councils like the one he directs in Oktibbeha County are valuable because they “create spaces where [local] people from different institutions with different interests can discuss issues related to food and agriculture, but perhaps more importantly, they explore ways to make fresh and healthy food more available locally.”

The Oktibbeha Food Policy Council

is working with groups of community members to determine priority areas, secure funding through grants, and design programming to improve access to healthy foods in Oktibbeha County.

*“Right now, we find places that are really rich in terms of agriculture, like the Mississippi Delta for example, but have high food insecurity rates and people without access to fresh and healthy food.”*  
~ Diego Thompson

For example, the council is trying to compile a directory of local farmers who are selling produce in Starkville during the summer months. This directory

would include contact information for the farmers and would be designed to improve farmers’ market opportunities, as well as local residents’ awareness of healthy food options.

Since its 2016 inception, the Oktibbeha Food Policy Council has included a diverse representation of community member participants, such as farmers, policy makers, residents, academics, students and individuals from MSU’s John C. Stennis Institute of Government and Community Development, the Mississippi Department of Health, and the Peace Corps, among others.

Meeting once a month at the Oktibbeha County Extension Office, the Oktibbeha Food Policy Council is open to all individuals who, like Thompson, want to help halt food insecurity in Oktibbeha County.





# SCHOLARS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE DELTA

Known for its rich history, extensive farming, and plentiful wildlife, the Mississippi Delta also possesses its own set of unique social issues. Sociologists and policy makers have conducted extensive research in the delta for many years on issues such as food insecurity and education. Sociologists from Mississippi State University have been on the forefront of this research, working for years to develop a program designed to involve undergraduates in the Mississippi Delta.

The Delta Scholars Program is a collaborative effort between MSU's Judy and Bobby Shackouls Honors College, the Social Science Research Center, the Department of Sociology, the Center for Population Studies at the University of Mississippi and Harvard Law School Mississippi Delta Fellows program. The multidisciplinary experience is designed for undergraduates who are interested in the topics of food insecurity, economic development, health care and education in the Mississippi Delta.

The program officially started in July 2018 when 12 undergraduate students with various academic interests and

backgrounds convened at MSU for a two-week forum focused on life in the Mississippi Delta. Faculty advisers and a representative from the Harvard Delta Fellows Program also participated.

Georgia native Kecia Johnson, an MSU Department of Sociology assistant professor and faculty adviser for the Delta Scholars Program, said the program brings awareness to issues in the delta, among other things.

"It is first to bring awareness to the social problems that exist in the delta, but also to shine light on the good things that are happening in the delta," Johnson said.

Delta Scholars Program participants spent time visiting cities in the Mississippi Delta, listening to speakers from grassroot organizations and nonprofits, talking about issues with local elected officials and state legislators, and brainstorming with their fellow cohort members.

Summer Jefferson, a junior biochemistry major at the University of Mississippi from Cumming, Georgia, said her interactions with the other cohort members were her

favorite part of the Delta Scholars Program. Jefferson said each member had their "own unique interests, which made the conversations at dinner so rich and diverse."

"The discussions we could have about our fundamental values and how we approach the issues we were being exposed to added a whole new dimension to the programming and brought the program to life," Jefferson said.

In addition to educational seminars and group activities, participants worked with advisers to develop and present their own project proposals with solutions for improving life in the Mississippi Delta. Students worked on these proposals primarily in the evening and were encouraged to consult with advisers.

As a faculty adviser, Johnson said she increased her own knowledge of the Mississippi Delta while helping students develop proposals.

"After they would attend these presentations and interact with the speakers, they had time to work on their projects over night and have





some proposals in mind,” she said. At the end of the Delta Scholars Program, students presented their proposals and project ideas.

Their projects, however, did not halt at the end of the two-week stint in Mississippi. Students who attended the summer program presented the same project—complete with updates—at a Harvard University conference this past fall. In addition to reconvening with their Delta Scholars cohort, the students received a tour of Cambridge and the city of Boston.

Participant Mayukh Datta, a current MSU student from Kosciusko, continued working this year to implement the idea he developed during the Delta Scholars Program. Datta has been working with the Holmes County School District to create a backpack feeding program for Durant Elementary School.

Datta developed a program to provide 15 students with backpacks full of food to take home on weekends for a 10-week period, an idea inspired by his time with the Delta Scholars Program. He chose to implement the program in Durant because “100% of the students rely on the school lunch program.”

Participants considered the first Delta Scholars Program an immense success and feel the projects they developed will affect positive change in the Mississippi Delta. “This program rekindled my love for Mississippi and gave me a reason to come back after my college education,” Datta said.

## PILKINTON RETIRES

**M**elinda Pilkinton, Ph.D., LCSW, retired in May 2019 following 20 years of service. She began her teaching career at Mississippi State University as a part-time instructor in 1999 and joined the faculty in the Department of Sociology’s Social Work Program full time in 2000. She served as the field coordinator for social work internships from 2003 to 2013 and has since served as the social work program director.

Pilkinton’s teaching and service has impacted students, colleagues, and community members. She joined MSU with experience as a Licensed Certified Social Worker (LCSW), including work in schools, hospitals and nursing homes. Prior to her faculty appointment, she served Baptist Hospital Behavioral Health as clinical coordinator of psychiatric and substance abuse treatment. She previously served as coordinator of children services for Region VII Mental Health, a social work supervisor at Health Counseling Agency, a nursing home consultant, an outpatient mental health therapist, and a school social worker.

Pilkinton’s research interests involve military issues, substance misuse and women’s issues, including poverty, barriers to employment, incarceration and domestic violence. Her research is highlighted by collaborations with MSU’s G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery Center for America’s Veterans on course development for returning veteran students and a multi-disciplinary team of engineers, psychologists and sociologists investigating forensic interviewing of children with robots. Her publications include one book chapter, three book reviews, one technical paper and 11 journal articles, with more in progress. She



has been published in *Affilia: The Journal of Women in Social Work*, *The Journal of Drugs*, *The Journal of Women in Social Work*, *The Journal of Drug Studies*, *The Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *Social Work and Health*, and *The Journal of Drug Education and Reflections*, among other publications. She also has served as a textbook manuscript reviewer.

Pilkinton’s dedication to the field extends beyond the classroom. She served on the Mississippi Board of Examiners for Social Workers and Marriage and Family Therapists for eight years, was elected to serve on the nominating committee for Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), later served on the board of directors for ASWB, and was an ASWB committee member for Regulation and Standards and the Licensure Examination revisions. She also has been a member of the board of directors for the Mississippi Chapter of National Association of Social Workers and the Mississippi Conference on Social Welfare.

She holds three degrees in social work, including a bachelor’s degree from Mississippi State University, a master’s degree from the University of Southern Mississippi and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Jackson State University. She plans to remain active with the university and community throughout retirement.

# CYBER SECURITY

## SECURITY IN A CYBER-WORLD...POSSIBLE?

Cybersecurity. Cyberattacks. In a world dependent on technology, hackers have the capability of crippling almost every aspect of today's society. For researchers in Mississippi State University's College of Arts and Sciences, an area of interest and study is not necessarily how attackers are maneuvering, but rather why they are.

How do we counteract this problem? How do we stay safe in the world of the "dark web," the mysterious realm of the cyber world?

"At its core, cyberthreat is a people problem, and without involvement of the social scientists and humanists, cybersecurity research is doomed to fail," said Giselle Thibaudeau, associate dean for research in the College of Arts and Sciences.

"MSU, and the College of Arts and Sciences in particular, has the expertise and resources to engage, impact and succeed in cybersecurity research if we embark from a broadly defined social science context," Thibaudeau said.

One of the social scientists working in this area is David May, a professor in the Department of Sociology. An MSU faculty member since 2012, May teaches Understanding White Collar and Cybercrime—a course explaining causes, consequences and policy gaps in the areas of corporate, government and cybercrime from both a sociological and criminological perspective.

May said cybersecurity is best understood as "actions, policies and practices taken by individuals and organizations to protect personal data from unauthorized use."

"Generally, cybersecurity breaches almost always result from a human that wants unauthorized access to data and another human making a decision that opens the door for Human 1 to gain access to those data," May said. "All the computer science knowledge in the world cannot prevent cybersecurity violations if the humans don't do their part."

May said social scientists can help "understand the motives for cybercrime" and other unauthorized access, and "can help



develop prevention strategies” based on their understanding of the human mind.

To combat cyberattacks, MSU is on the move. In addition to social scientists like May, who research and teach on the reasons why attacks happen, MSU’s Information Technology Services provides tangible ways to fight cyberattacks, complete with computer security personnel who provide technical defenses to active network and malware attacks.

Allen Parrish, MSU’s associate vice president for research and also a professor of computer science and engineering, said training is emphasized to ensure MSU personnel follow good “cyber hygiene” and “avoid doing things that may inadvertently introduce vulnerabilities—such as using good passwords, multi-factor authentication, not clicking on links from phishing e-mails, etc.”

Cybersecurity is an “important area where MSU can be of service to the community, state and nation,” Parrish said, adding that MSU has “world-class faculty” in the social sciences, humanities, business, engineering and agriculture.

“These faculty are engaged in a variety of projects that touch cybersecurity in areas such as deception, criminal justice data analytics, network security, security of autonomous vehicle systems, and many others,” Parrish said.

In October 2018, MSU hosted a cybersecurity awareness week, complete with seminars on combating cyberattacks, as well as one-on-one conversations with participants about ways to avoid being a victim of cyberattacks.

Commander Tracy Emmersen, chair of the Department of Cyber Science at the U.S. Naval Academy, was a guest of Parrish’s. She presented a seminar on the academy’s cybersecurity program, sharing wisdom and tips with her audience.

Additionally, MSU’s Office of Research and Economic Development hosted “The Evolving State of Campus Cyber Security—Everyone is a Target!”—a panel discussion highlighting areas of concern and defense. Panelists included Drew Hamilton, director of MSU’s Center for Cyber Innovation; Trey Breckenridge, director of MSU’s High Performance Computing Collaboratory; and Tom Ritter, MSU’s senior security and compliance officer.

Ritter spoke at length about the university’s strongest defense against cyberattacks—Duo 2 authentication factor.

“Duo 2 has greatly increased the security at MSU,” Ritter said. “It requires people to have two things—a password only you know and your cellphone. This greatly reduces the risk of ‘bad guys’ breaking in.”

Prior to the Duo 2 system, Ritter said hackers had the capability to break into the system and “steal” paychecks by changing direct deposit information. Financial aid also was vulnerable. MSU employees have been using Duo 2 for two years, and this spring, the university moved all other campus users—20,000+ individuals—to Duo 2.

Although Duo 2 has significantly increased cybersecurity on campus, Parrish said MSU is subject to cyberattacks because “every large computing enterprise” is a target. However, Parrish stressed that individuals are the first line of defense against any attack.

“People need to practice good habits with regard to passwords, storage of confidential data and other digital practices,” he said.

May echoed Parrish’s call for individuals to stand as the first line of defense against cyberattacks.

“Be cyber-aware,” May said. “Close programs when done, log off the internet when not using it, avoid social media sites, and limit online financial transactions, particularly from wireless networks and smart phones. Change your passwords regularly and make them hard to guess when creating them. The less cyber-presence an individual has, the less likely they are to be victimized.”

May said a number of social science faculty are involved in efforts to better understand open source data, cybercrime, and cybersecurity law and policy to strengthen cybersecurity. “Each of those areas are fertile ground for research and policy development to contribute to efforts to promote cybersecurity,” he said.

Though cyberattacks do pose a threat, remaining vigilant and aware of an online presence help combat attacks. If you feel you have been a victim of a cyberattack, seek assistance by contacting MSU’s Information Technology Services Help Desk at [servicedesk@its.msstate.edu](mailto:servicedesk@its.msstate.edu).

*“These faculty are engaged in a variety of projects that touch cybersecurity in areas such as deception, criminal justice data analytics, network security, security of autonomous vehicle systems, and many others”*  
~ Allen Parrish

## NEW FACULTY & STAFF

**Tara Sutton** joined the Department of Sociology faculty at Mississippi State University in 2018. A different type of Bulldog, she received her Doctor of Philosophy in sociology, Master of Science in human development and family science, and Bachelor of Science in psychology from the University of Georgia. Sutton completed a Quantitative Methods Certificate in 2017 and is proficient in several advanced statistical techniques. Her research focuses on the social and family contexts of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and other criminal, violent and deviant behavior among adolescents and young adults. She is particularly interested in violence against women and children, the intergenerational transmission of violence, and youth deviance. Sutton serves as a reviewer for multiple journals, including the *Journal of Research on Adolescence* and the *Journal of Criminal Justice*, and holds professional memberships in organizations, such as the American Society of Criminology, National Council on Family Relations, and Sociologists for Women in Society.



Sutton

In August 2019, **Sanna King** will join the sociology faculty at Mississippi State University. She received a Bachelor of Arts in ethnic studies from the University of California San Diego, a Master of Arts in American studies from Columbia University, and a Master of Arts in sociology from University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. She will complete her Doctor of Philosophy in sociology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. King's research interests include juvenile justice, critical criminology, punishment, crime and deviance, corrections, prisoner re-entry, social control, women's studies, race, ethnicity, social stratification and inequality, African-American history, schools and education, post-Colonial studies, and cultural studies. She holds professional memberships in the American Sociological Association, American Society of Criminology, and Society for the Study of Social Problems, among others. (Not pictured.)



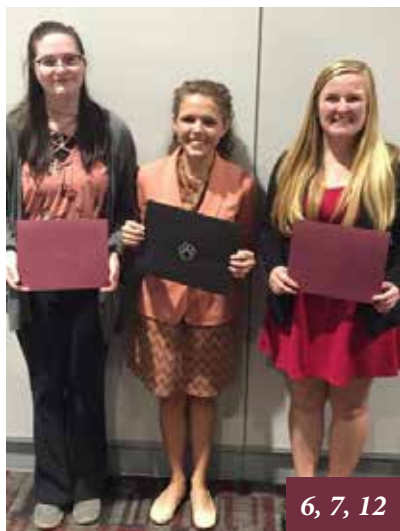
Dean

May 2018 saw the addition of two new staff members to the Department of Sociology, **Mary Ann Dean** and **Jeanett Mallett**. Dean serves as academic coordinator, working closely with students and advisors to navigate coursework and degree requirements. Mallett serves as administrative assistant, assisting with the administrative functions of the department. Dean and Mallett are integral to the ebb and flow of Sociology, and we are happy to have their support in the continued success of the department.



Mallett





## FACULTY & STUDENT AWARDS

1. **Raymond Barranco** is a recipient of the Dean's Eminent Scholar Award for the 2018 fall semester.
2. Undergraduate sociology major and gender studies minor **Jihyun Shin** is recognized with the 2018 Edward C. and Johnnie W. Lehman Award.
3. **Stacy Haynes** is the recipient of the 2019 MSU Alumni Association's Outstanding Graduate Student Mentor Award.
4. Bachelor of Social Work graduate **Monique Boyd** is the recipient of the Mississippi Society for Social Work Leadership in Health Care Scholarship, presented during the Society's 46th Annual Conference.
5. Ph.D. candidate **Ismail Yigit** is the recipient of the 2019 MSU Graduate Research Assistant of the Year Award.
6. Social work student **Amber Woolam** is a recipient of the Reaves-Davenport Excellence in Social Work Scholarship.
7. Social work student **Brooke Anderson** is a recipient of the Reaves-Davenport Excellence in Social Work Scholarship.
8. **Rachel Allison** is awarded a FIFA Research Scholarship by Fédération Internationale de Football Association and the International Centre for Sports Studies for a study titled, "Women's World Cup Fandom: Identities, Expressions, and Communities."
9. **Adele Crudden** is recognized by the Mississippi Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers as the 2019 Mississippi Social Worker of the Year.
10. Social work student **Lauren Cody** is the recipient of the Margo Swain Scholarship, presented during the Annual Forum of the Mississippi Conference on Social Welfare.
11. Bachelor of Social Work graduate **Katherine "Katie" Gaushell** is the recipient of the 2019 Outstanding Undergraduate Social Work Student Award and MSU nominee to the Mississippi Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.
12. Social work student **Mallorie Waldon** is the recipient of the God at the Speed of Light Endowed Scholarship.
13. Ph.D. student **Laura Jean Kerr** is the recipient of the SWS 2019 Beth Hess Award.

## FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

**Raymond Barranco**, associate professor, is the recipient of the Fall 2018 College of Arts and Sciences Gary Myers Dean's Eminent Scholar Award. The honor recognizes his exceptional research, education and service that enhances the quality and stature of academic programs within the college. Barranco is a nationally recognized scholar who maintains an impressive research agenda, engages in important service activities and mentors students.



**Stacy Haynes**, associate professor, is the recipient of the 2019 Outstanding Graduate Student Mentor Award presented by the Mississippi State University Alumni Association. She was honored during the annual Faculty Awards and Recognition Reception for doing her part to make Mississippi State special. As graduate coordinator for the Department of Sociology, Haynes mentors students through teaching and service and encourages critical thinking and collaboration.



## GRADUATE NEWS

**Courtney Heath Windhorn** (Spring 2019). *White Washing Our Children's Education: Examining Segregationist School Choice in the Rural South* (Master's Thesis, Mississippi State University).

**Kelli Russell** (Spring 2019). *The Developers and the Independents: White Mississippi Cattle Producers' Perspectives on Government Farm Programs and Success* (Master's Thesis, Mississippi State University).

**Jeannice Louine** (August 2018). *Media portrayals of police-involved deaths in U.S. newspapers, 2013-2016* (Doctoral Dissertation, Mississippi State University).

**Kristen Stives** (December 2018). *Examining the Stigma of Sex Offending in the Media, the Community, and the Prison* (Doctoral Dissertation, Mississippi State University).

**Megan Stubbs-Richardson** (December 2018). *Making a decision to retreat, relate, or retaliate: An examination of theoretical predictors of behavioral responses to bullying in a high school setting* (Doctoral Dissertation, Mississippi State University).





# GRADUATE STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS



**AMANDA GOCHANOUR** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at Mississippi State University. Her dissertation, “The ga(y)ze and their families: Representation of sexual minority families in online streaming services’ original programming,” focuses on fictional television programs produced and distributed by online streaming services and their characterization of sexual minority characters. Gochanour’s other current research projects focus on assessing the needs of the LGBTQ population in Mississippi, race and reproductive justice, and issues surrounding sexual minority-headed families.

Previous research projects focused on Twitter’s utility for social scientific data collection, the sociology of rumor, race and reproductive justice, and program evaluation of a summer camp designed to encourage interest in STEM careers among girls in middle and high school. Gochanour is assisting with survey instrument design, data analysis, and reporting of research results at MSU’s Survey Research Laboratory.



**LAURA JEAN KERR** is a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology at Mississippi State University. Her focus areas are stratification and gender studies. She began her postsecondary education at Meridian Community College, graduating with an associate’s degree before transferring to the University of Southern Mississippi. She completed her master’s degree at MSU, contributing to education research, assessment and curriculum development before returning to complete her doctoral degree.

Her upcoming dissertation focuses on food insecurity among Mississippi community college students. The proposed research examines the relation of food insecurity to education completion and health, and examines the ability of state safety net options to alleviate food insecurity experiences.

Kerr’s interest areas are social policy, stratification of place, rural spaces, community, social inequality of gender, race, and health in educational institutions, health institutions, and community.

Kerr is the recipient of the 2019 Sociologists for Women in Society Beth Hess Award. She is recognized for exemplifying the spirit of the scholarship, combining a commitment to teaching and mentoring with a research agenda animated by

social justice. Kerr’s commitment to community engagement and public sociology, as well as her work with groups such as the Mississippi Food Insecurity Project, affirmed her selection by the award committee as this year’s winner.



**ERIN KING** is a master’s student in the Department of Sociology at Mississippi State University. Her home town is Muscle Shoals, Alabama. She received her bachelor’s degree in food and nutrition from the University of Alabama, as well as her Master of Public Health degree from the University of Southern Mississippi. King’s research interests include minority health and health disparities. Her thesis topic focuses on how discrimination affects a student’s decision to further his or her academic career beyond high school.

King is a current member of the Mississippi Food Insecurity Project, the Oktibbeha Food Policy Council, and the Mississippi Public Health Association. Her past training includes work as an Infant Hearing Screener and internship with the Gulf States Health Policy Center. Her future plans are to become a 4-H Extension Agent in her hometown.



**KELLI RUSSELL** is a master's candidate in the Department of Sociology at Mississippi State University. Her current research focuses on farmers' perspectives on government agricultural programs and resources. She recently defended her master's thesis, "The developers and the independents: white Mississippi cattle producers' perspectives on government farm programs and success." Russell is a graduate fellow with the Myrlie Evers-Williams Institute for the Elimination of Health Disparities and a past winner of the MSU President's Commission on the Status of Women Outstanding Graduate Student Award. Her most recent publications include technical reports for the Southeastern Health Equity Council, the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center at Alcorn State University, and the Northeast Regional Development Center at Pennsylvania State University.

**DAVID SINGLETON** is a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology at Mississippi State University. He graduated from the University of North Carolina at Asheville with a bachelor's degree in economics in 2006. He completed a master's degree in applied economics



at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 2008. Following his training in econometrics at UNC-Greensboro, he worked as a statistical analyst and consultant for the Nielsen Company on site with clients in the consumer package goods industry. Singleton earned a Master of Business Administration degree from Western Carolina University in 2016. He is preparing for the doctoral preliminary examination in the stratification concentration. His area of research interest is the effect of imprisonment on the post-release health outcomes of the formerly incarcerated. He will be teaching two sections of Intro to Sociology this fall and looks forward to teaching statistics oriented courses in the future.

**ISMAIL YIGIT** is a graduate research assistant at the Social Science Research Center and a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at Mississippi State University. He has been working on the Mississippi Kids Count project that is funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and provides comprehensive information about children's health, education, safety and economic well-being in Mississippi. His responsibilities with the Kids Count project include management of



an online data center, organizing, and publishing a yearly databook.

Prior to working at the SSRC, Yigit was a teaching assistant and instructor in MSU's sociology department. His research broadly examines health outcome of social inequalities, stratification, and ethnic and racial minorities. He is working on a Ph.D. dissertation. His work can be found in academic journals, including *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *City Journal*, and *American Journal of Qualitative Research*.

Yigit is the recipient of the 2019 MSU Graduate Research Assistant of the Year Award. Recognized for exemplary research skill and integrity, work ethic and attitude, knowledge, and ability to communicate research, he is an integral member of the department and the Social Science Research Center. Yigit has proven instrumental in working alongside research scientists on a number of varied projects at SSRC's Family and Children Research Unit (FCRU). He also has shown professionalism and great potential for ongoing contributions to the field through his many research activities within the sociology department.



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



## JIHYUN SHIN

*Senior, Sociology*

*American Life, Worldwide Studies*

Many students at Mississippi State University discover their educational purpose while studying at the land-grant institution, but they also find joy and a place of belonging in the activities and organizations in which they are involved. Jihyun Shin, a current student from the Republic of Korea, expressed how important involvement has been for her while striving to adjust to the Mississippi lifestyle.

“Since coming to MSU, I have tried to experience as much as I can, so I can learn about people, society and the world,” Shin said.

In South Korea, Shin said a strong emphasis is placed on education. “We

grade on a relative education scale, which means only 15 percent of all students can get an A,” she said, noting even students who make 90s on exams sometimes fall short of an overall A.

“We go to school from 8 a.m. until 10 p.m., so we have no time to enjoy leisure activities,” Shin said.

Shin transferred from South Korea’s Daegu Catholic University to MSU in fall 2017 and is preparing to graduate from MSU in fall 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts in sociology. In addition to studying sociology, Shin is working toward earning a minor in gender studies. Of the many things she studies, Shin said she is most interested in rural sociology, specifically food insecurity.

“I want to work at the World Food Program. This foundation has a detailed goal to educate people aiming for zero hunger,” Shin said. “I aspire to be part of the WFP where I can explore my interests and utilize my talents to help people who suffer from famine and health problems.”

In addition to her day-to-day academic responsibilities, Shin is preparing for a presentation at MSU’s 2019 Undergraduate Research Symposium, hosted annually by the Judy and Bobby Shackouls Honors College. Shin will discuss research on her topic, “How

rurality impacts people living with food insecurity in Vardaman.”

Shin is also preparing for her third appearance at the Southeastern Council on Family Relations annual conference this April in Bentonville, Arkansas. The theme for this year’s conference is “The Evolution of Relationships: Changing Social Roles.” Shin will be presenting her paper, “Protection for all,” which she said focuses on “explaining the realities of sex education for Latina girls, both at school and home.”

“Specifically, I examine different attitudes of Latino boys and Latina girls toward romantic relationships and sexualities. I also investigate how heterosexuality is the only ‘approved’ form of sexuality in that specific society, which is dominated by this one-sided perspective,” Shin said. “Finally, I suggest new ways the Latino/Latina culture can be era-adaptable and incorporate self-protectable sex education.”

Through both academic and organizational involvement, Shin has been able to find her place and thrive at MSU. She credits her professors in Korea and MSU faculty Ashley Vancil-Leap, Margaret Hagerman and Diego Thompson for their encouragement and dedication in helping her be successful as a future sociologist.



# PHI BETA KAPPA CHARTER MEMBERS

Mississippi State University has become the 287th U.S. institution of higher education to house a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. A new Gamma of Mississippi chapter was installed in April during a ceremony at The Mill at MSU Conference Center in Starkville. Inductees included 77 students and eight Foundation members, chosen for their extraordinary academic achievement and commitment to the ideals of the liberal arts and sciences.

Congratulations to Sara Doll and Abigail Kepto, undergraduate sociology students majoring in criminology, for being recognized as charter members of the Gamma of Mississippi chapter. Phi Beta Kappa is America's most prestigious academic honor society. Only 10 percent of U.S. colleges and universities have chapters, and inductees are among



the top 10% of their graduating class. Members include 45 MSU faculty and staff members, 17 U.S. presidents, 41 Supreme Court justices, and more than 140 Nobel Laureates.

The installation of the chapter follows an intensive, multi-year application

and evaluation process. Among the criteria reviewed by the Phi Beta Kappa Committee on Qualifications are the university's educational rigor in the arts and sciences, institutional dedication to liberal arts education, demonstrated commitment to academic freedom, and faculty excellence.

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## MISSISSIPPI VOICES

Ron and Betty Bennett of Weir were guest speakers in Child Welfare Services, an undergraduate social work course at Mississippi State University. During their April 15 visit, they shared stories about their journey as foster parents and challenged students to consider the important role that competent, caring social workers have in ensuring that all children receive the care and protection they need for healthy development. For more information about foster parenting, contact your local Department of Child Protection Services office.



*Pictured left to right: Rachael Burton, Sarah Liberto, Sarah McMillan, Aaliyah Porter, Ron Bennett, Betty Bennett, Ashlynn Lutz, Tiffany Williamson, Rebecca Simpure, Kent Macon and Tekilya Brown.*



## STUDENT NEWS

Mariah Warner defended her undergraduate honors thesis, “Trust in the police: How bad is it, and what can we do to fix it?,” in spring 2019. Ashley Perry (Sociology) served as thesis supervisor, and Lindsey Peterson (Sociology) and Seth Oppenheimer (Shackouls Honors College) served as committee members. Warner was recognized in March as a graduating member of the university’s inaugural Provost Scholars class (pictured with MSU Provost and Executive Vice President Judy Bonner and MSU President Mark E. Keenum, back row, center, and other graduating members). Provost Scholarships are annual honors that include an academic scholarship, study abroad funding, and research grants, among others. Warner graduated in May with criminology and political science degrees and will attend graduate school at Ohio State University, majoring in sociology.



## JOINING THE CONVERSATION AT SCJA

Sierra Nelson and Abigail Kepto, students majoring in criminology, presented at the Southern Criminal Justice Association Meeting in Pensacola Beach, Florida, in September 2018. The conference theme was “Making a Difference about Crime and Criminal Justice.”

Nelson, a graduate student, presented “Test of General Strain Theory: Which Types of Bullying Result in the Highest Risk for Self-Harm Related Behavior Among Youth?” as part of the panel “Bullying and Homophobia in Schools: An Assessment.”

Kepto, an undergraduate student, presented “Hacks and Cybersecurity Set Backs—An Analysis of Organizational Hacks from 2015-2018” as part of the panel “Cybercrime:

Most Wanted Criminals, International Issues, Organizational Crimes, and Insider Offenses.”

Nelson, Kepto and other students, researchers, educators, and practitioners learned about current criminal justice research findings through presentations, panels and roundtable discussions at the SCJA annual conference.

A regional organization affiliated with the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, SCJA provides professional development opportunities to multidisciplinary members from Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.



# RESEARCH SYMPOSIA

Research provides our students the opportunity to apply classroom knowledge, develop skills, collaborate with peers and faculty, and gain confidence as they explore new areas of interest. Hosted by the university's Judy and Bobby Shackouls Honors College, the Spring 2019 Undergraduate Research Symposium featured more than 200 submissions from students conducting faculty-guided research. The annual event allows students to share their scholarship, creativity and innovation to address the needs of communities worldwide.



## EMILY TINGLE

### *Race and Food Insecurity in Rural Mississippi*

This project mainly draws on sociological literature regarding the racial wealth gap and how that gap applies to food security. Due to race playing a large part in the stratification of the U.S. economic system, minorities are put at a disadvantage in regards to income, leading to their higher likelihood of being food insecure. This issue becomes intersectional in rural communities where resources are significantly more scarce causing the likelihood of food insecurity to increase for minorities. This project also includes ethnographical research through both observations and interviews on the products available at local grocery stores and WIC centers to draw more realistic conclusions

on how much help regarding food security is actually available versus what is available on paper.

The conclusions of this project provide information as to the demographics of those most food insecure and what options they currently have in their communities and through government assistance. These findings conclude that there needs to be a larger call to action to improve the conditions of food availability in rural communities as food insecurity can be considered a public health crisis and causes major health risks.



## JIHYUN SHIN

### *Effects of Gender, Age, Race and Rurality on Food Insecurity*

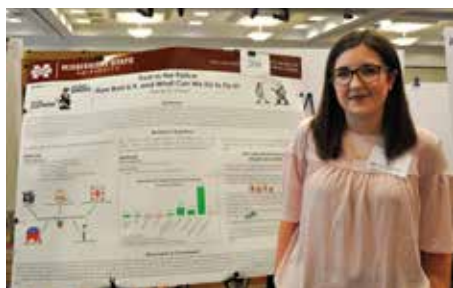
The purpose of this research is to investigate food insecurity in a rural

setting (Vardaman, Mississippi). Food insecurity means that people cannot pursue high-quality foods that are healthy, fresh and affordable. The percentage of poverty and food insecurity in Mississippi (both at 22%) is higher than the national poverty average of 15.5% and food insecurity average of 13%. This study has two hypotheses that aim to measure the level of food insecurity for people who live in the rural community of Vardaman. My first hypothesis suggests that there is no link between residents' food preferences and actual "buying" practices based on whether residents favor fresh local and organic foods.

Even though people in Vardaman realize the importance of nutritional food, their ideas are not linked to their real purchasing and eating habits. Secondly, there is a relationship between self-reported health and the frequency of utilizing unhealthy cooking styles, such as convenience foods and fast food restaurants. On average, residents use "ready meals (instant)" or cook "ready-made meals." Interestingly, recipients who answered



only having “ready meals” are one-third of the participants. Through the research, it is possible to investigate the co-relationships between rurality and food insecurity. As a result, data that are used for these hypotheses prove the significance of rurality and high food insecurity level. People in Vardaman need patterns in foodways and food governmentality for their health and initiative lives. Based on rural community characteristics, collective food secure programs, communal and interactive among neighborhoods, should be introduced.



### MARIAH WARNER

*Trust in the Police: How Bad is it, and What Can We do to Fix it?*

Trust in the police is not a new issue; however, the proliferation of the media has made it recently more publicly salient than ever. Trust in the police has been declining in the U.S. for many years, particularly among black individuals whose levels of trust are already lower than other groups. Trust in the legitimacy of law enforcement is necessary for effective policing. The police depend on members of the community to report crimes and cooperate during investigations, and this cooperation is only possible if the police are trusted. For the rule of law to be maintained in the U.S., changes to increase citizens' levels of trust and confidence in the police are necessary.

All literature finds that white individuals express more trust in the police than

blacks, as well as conservatives more than liberals. Scholarship varies in regard to age and gender, though the general consensus is that older males are the most trusting group. Literature focuses in on three other broad areas in its discussion of trust in the police—general feelings of social trust toward one's community, belief in the absence or presence of procedural justice, and perceptions of police effectiveness in the neighborhood in terms of disorder and incivilities. In this project, data from the World Values Survey collected in 2011 in the U.S. was used to examine these correlates of trust in the police by way of logistic regression models. In accordance with recent scholarship, data indicate that individuals' perceptions of procedural justice have the greatest impact on one's trust in the police. These findings should impart legislators to give substantial weight to potential policies such as the “Law Enforcement Trust and Integrity Act of 2018” if the U.S. wishes to improve its policing.



### MAGGIE BRIDGES

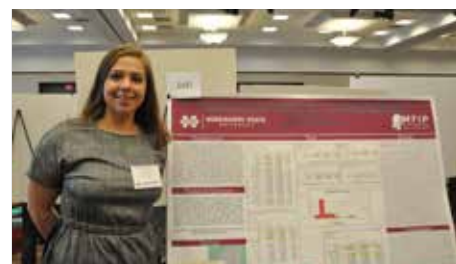
*Literature Review on the Racial Disparity in Maternal Mortality Rates*

America continues to have one of the highest maternal mortality rates out of all developed nations. African-American women in particular are 243% more likely to die due to pregnancy-related causes than white women. This racial disparity in maternal mortality rates has been proven to hold true even when controlling for factors such as physical

health, access to prenatal care, income, education level and socioeconomic status. Knowing of this clear link between race and maternal mortality rates, a literature review was conducted to further analyze the specifics of how exactly race shapes pregnancy-related health outcomes and determine what can be done to reverse these trends. Both quantitative and qualitative data were examined.

As for social causes of this racial disparity, there tends to be a general consensus that African-American women experience a negative physical effect from having to undergo years of both individual and structural level racism—a process often referred to as “weathering” (NCBI 2017). Additionally, health care staff often lack an understanding of how race affects both their patients and themselves, leading to them holding implicit racial biases that affect their patient care and patient outcomes. One of the most mentioned solutions to this racial disparity was to further educate medical staff on race itself, so they could at least be aware of the effect that it has in the clinical setting. However, since this is only an individual level solution, more research is needed on potential institutional level solutions.

### SARAH CAYLOR



*I have at least one friend in the neighborhood that I can depend on; Investigating the effects of community engagement on food insecurity in a rural Mississippi community.*



The 1,300 residents of Vardaman, Mississippi, have access to one small local supermarket, two restaurants, and three gas stations for all their food needs. If the only grocery store is picked over or does not carry items residents want, they must drive 30-60 minutes to the next full-service supermarket. This research analyzes whether an individual's sense of community is correlated with his or her level of food insecurity. In this study, Caylor constructs a measure for food insecurity that focuses on number of purchases a month, miles to the store, time it takes to get to the store, whether residents can buy what they want, barriers to getting the food people want, and dependence on social services. In a recent paper titled "Changing Times in Rural America," Sarah Whitley presents a qualitative framework for how community involvement can affect food insecurity. Caylor's research objectives are to utilize Whitley's framework for analyzing community involvement to help construct a sense of community from the qualitative survey instrument. Participants of the study are 49 Vardaman residents who agreed to be surveyed about food access, food patterns, sense of community, and participant background information such as age, gender, race and income. The results from this survey add to the current body of knowledge concerning

food insecurity in Mississippi. Caylor hypothesizes that residents with more indicators of sense of community are less likely to be food insecure. She also suspects that residents who carpool to grocery stores are more integrated than those who mainly take their own car.



### STEPHANIE DURR

#### *The Effect of Race on Median Length of Stay in Foster Care*

The disproportionality of black children in foster care has long been a topic of study, meaning that there are more black children in foster care than would be expected given their numbers in the general population. Interestingly, research on this topic has shown that states with larger than average black populations have lower ratios of racial disproportionality among children in foster care and house fewer total children in foster care (Foster, 2012). In addition, another study revealed that foster care caseworkers were slightly more likely to rate black children as experiencing

a higher level of risk of harm than their white counterparts, which increases the probability that a case is substantiated for maltreatment and, therefore, that more black children end up in foster care (Font et al., 2012). This same study also found that black caseworkers tend to assess every family at a greater level of harm than white caseworkers, suggesting that the racial disproportionality in the foster care system is, at least in part, a result of institutional racism and individual racial bias. However, no previous studies have analyzed the effect that race of the child and the racial composition of the state as a whole has on the median length of stay for children in foster care. In other words, black children are more likely to end up in foster care than white children, but no one knows how their lengths of stay compare. This study addresses that gap in research by consolidating data from the Children's Bureau Child Welfare Outcomes Report Data, the U.S. Census, and other data related to state expenditures per capita and poverty rates. Expanding on the research of Foster (2012), this study will use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, a method for estimating the unknown parameters in a linear regression model, to determine the strength of the relationship between the variables in this study.





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