The Social Science Research Center has a long and proud tradition as a location for meaningful social science research for scholars on our campus and beyond. Its origins can be traced to the Social Science Round Table that began meeting shortly after World War II. This body’s goal was to promote research in sociology, history, economics, political science, and other related disciplines that participated in the forum. Its signal contribution was to advocate for the creation of a research organization to facilitate social science research on campus. From their vision and efforts grew the Social Science Research Center, which was formally recognized in 1950 as the first campus-wide research enterprise.

The Center, from its origin, has emphasized interdisciplinary research and the application of social science knowledge to the most critical problems facing the state, region, and nation. The number of disciplines participating in the center has grown to include psychology, business, social work, public administration, anthropology, communications, public relations, law, public health, and computer science. Because it is an interdisciplinary entity, it is not uncommon to find projects that blend the social sciences with agriculture, engineering, medicine, and education here.

The Social Science Research Center has become a place for scientists from other institutions to come and conduct research, study, and participate in the special environment of the Center. Collaboration across disciplines, across institutions, and even across nations is an essential feature of the Center’s strategy of development. This strategy markedly expands the capacity of the Center’s scientists to address the most difficult research questions. These collaborations invigorate and stimulate the intellectual dialogue in the Center and play a major role in shaping our organizational culture.

The Center has had a highly successful year that is reported only in part in this annual report. The level of productivity is reflected in numerous publications, reports, and presentations. Our work is sponsored by numerous federal, a wide array of private foundations, and strong backing from state agencies in Mississippi. We are humbled and appreciative of their fine support and strive to earn the trust they have in us by making such substantial investments. Our students, both graduate and undergraduate, are among the most talented and successful on campus and play a key role in our research endeavors. Our support staff is recognized campus-wide for its talent and ability to facilitate the conduct of faculty and student research.

My colleagues and I, are most appreciative of the fine support we receive from the leadership of Mississippi State University and are thankful for the opportunities that this fine institution has provided us.

Sincerely,

Arthur G. Cosby
William L. Giles Distinguished Professor Emeritus
and Director Emeritus
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About the SSRC

The Social Science Research Center (SSRC) was established at Mississippi State University (MSU) in 1950 to promote, enhance and facilitate social science research and related scholarly activities. The Center is organized with university-wide responsibilities and reports to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development and the Vice President for Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine. The Center offers a superior research environment with an impressive array of research opportunities and options, state-of-the-art facilities, laboratories and support units that enhance and expand both the scope and quality of social science research. The SSRC fosters a rigorous and independent research environment to ensure objective, relevant and unbiased analyses.

The success of the SSRC relies primarily on the expertise, talents and entrepreneurial skills of its scientists. Individual scientists, or self-organized teams of researchers, provide the impetus and direction of funded research projects. They determine their research agendas and benefit from the SSRC facilities as they so choose. Research fellows and research associates, supported by an administrative staff and graduate and undergraduate research assistants, conduct both sponsored and unsponsored research projects. Funding for projects comes from a variety of sources including federal and state agencies, foundations, MSU units and other public and private entities. The SSRC research portfolio usually exceeds $10 million a year.

Research issues that social scientists face are now so profoundly complex that their solutions demand the combined resources of multiple disciplines, multiple professions and multiple institutions. From its origin, the SSRC has had a strong interdisciplinary emphasis. Scientists from a number of disciplines, both on campus and off, come together in the SSRC to work on common research problems. It is the norm to find various combinations of such diverse disciplines as psychologists, business professors, sociologists, social workers, geographers, historians, economists and political scientists joining together to bring to bear their expertise on various research problems.

The range of interdisciplinary involvement goes beyond the social sciences. The Center often becomes a place where social scientists team with colleagues from agriculture, engineering and other disciplines. The SSRC also forms partnerships, strategic alliances and collaborative agreements with entities such as state agencies, off-campus national-level research organizations and professional groups. These various interdisciplinary research enterprises provide a steady stream of innovative projects and creative investigations.
Mission Statement

The SSRC conducts research to explore social, economic, political, human resource and social-environmental problems facing the state, nation and world. Scientists strive to present findings to a variety of constituents in a meaningful way to improve the health, safety and well-being of all people.

SSRC Facilities

The SSRC is currently located in the Mississippi Technology Center, in the Thad Cochran Research, Technology and Economic Development Park. The Mississippi Health Policy Research Center (MHPRC) is located at the CAVS E building in Canton. In addition to the core space at CAVS E, the SSRC has access to state-of-the-art conference and meeting facilities.

Statement of Goals

The Social Science Research Center strives to be a center of excellence for social science research that serves the entire university community. This collective ambition is reflected in our institutional goals:

- To contribute to the University's graduate and undergraduate programs by involving students in research projects through assistantships and other work arrangements.
- To conduct rigorous, objective and unbiased research on relevant social, economic, political, human resource and social-environmental problems facing the state, nation and world.
- To provide a vehicle for unique social research and public service programs that do not fit more traditional academic structures.
- To provide a support system for the University to plan, develop, secure funding for and conduct social research on problems of interest to the scientific community and to consumers of research findings.
- To provide a mechanism whereby existing social science research capabilities in the University can be matched with funding sources.
Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) is purposely flat, with several internal research units, normally led by coordinators, reporting to the Director. Project directors operate with a great deal of autonomy and take full responsibility for the conduct of their projects.

Over the years, the SSRC has developed strong working relationships with faculty members and administrators in the College of Arts & Sciences, the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine, the College of Business and the College of Education. In addition, it has established strong linkages with outside funding sources, including federal and state agencies, research entities and foundations.

The research faculty members in the SSRC are the driving force for the Center’s activities. Together, they define the Center’s goals, develop research agendas, prepare and submit proposals and conduct research. The SSRC maintains a small staff of full-time research faculty to support ongoing research activities. These individuals are normally affiliated with an academic department. Other faculty members hold joint appointments on a continual basis between academic departments and the SSRC. A third category of faculty members works in the Center on a periodic basis, depending upon funding of a particular grant or contract, or is supported via summer appointments while developing research proposals. In order to facilitate the efforts of the research faculty, the SSRC seeks to maintain collegial, cooperative relationships with academic departments and other campus entities.

The Center maintains a core staff of experts to assist in the financial and personnel aspects of preparing, submitting and administering research grants and contracts, as well as individuals who manage specific Center programs, such as the Mississippi Alcohol Safety Education Program (MASEP). Research associates and graduate and undergraduate assistants support research and administrative activities. In addition, the Center employs many individuals on an intermittent basis to serve the needs of the individual projects.

The continued success of the SSRC is clearly dependent upon the personnel who participate in its activities. Attracting bright, capable, energetic and entrepreneurial individuals and then encouraging their continued intellectual and professional growth is a key element in the SSRC organizational philosophy. By keeping bureaucratic requirements to a minimum, the SSRC seeks to create an environment that fosters, facilitates and enables innovative and creative research efforts.
The Power of Images

The impact that images can have in our lives is unmeasurable, but two students from Croatia are attempting to do just that. They’re aiming to show how images and media can change how we view the world.

by Alan Burns

Some say that a picture is worth a thousand words. For Anja Stević and Emil Čančar, pictures and images are worth more than just words; they surround us every day and can have different effects on viewers.

“Visuals tell different stories than words because of the emotional impact they can create,” said Stević. “You can create or change entire world views with a single image.”

Stević and Čančar, both born and raised in Zagreb, Croatia, came to the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) this past spring to work on their master’s theses. After meeting with Dr. Art Cosby at the 2015 Big Data Conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia, the two were invited to get involved in research at the SSRC and work on their theses. The trip was a life changing event for the two, who spent almost 5 months in the United States.

“It was such a huge character building experience for us. I learned about new sides of myself and gained a new perspective on life,” Čančar said.

Stević was captivated with Mississippi and the south as a whole. “It was the biggest experience of my life, an absolute adventure. I learned about research from a new perspective and how research environments work,” she said. “When it comes to the south, the people are just exquisite, lovely, and caring.”

While researching at the SSRC, the two had the chance to work with the Social Media Tracking and Analysis System, or SMTAS. The system, which was developed at the SSRC, takes a big data approach to analyzing social media patterns and to gain insights into its use.
Čančar, who is researching how images are perceived on Twitter, used SMTAS to gather images from tweets. He says that the existence of SMTAS gave him a great starting point for his research.

“Getting to work with the SMTAS software was amazing,” he said. “I used SMTAS as my starting point, identifying dates and collecting images by setting up parameters in the software, which was easy.”

Stević’s research dives deeper into the use of images, as she looked into how media shapes realities, specifically the recent refugee crisis in the Middle East. Using the Klout scores of individual media organizations, she organized them from most to least influential before looking into their depictions of the crisis.

“I’m looking at how media constructs reality and meanings in hopes that I can deconstruct the media framing and their overall portrayal of the refugee crisis,” said Stević. “I was able to use SMTAS for my thesis and it just fed my curiosity. I would have an idea and SMTAS allowed me to take that idea and see it in front of me in real time.”

The 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil were a current example of media portrayal of refugees. Ten independent Olympic participants were chosen from South Sudan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Syria to compete as the Refugee Olympic Team. Stević said that she viewed it as a more positive portrayal of refugees by the media, as it could help people understand the importance of refugee integration in a world event spotlight.

With their theses defenses coming up soon, both Stević and Čančar are hopeful that their work will be a stepping stone to more prominent research in the future. They have been successfully guided by Dr. Viktorija Car, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Political Science at University of Zagreb. An active researcher in Communication, Car has been a crucial piece in the fruitful collaboration between the SSRC and the University of Zagreb.

“We’re just scratching the surface; this is exploratory for many events,” Stević said about their research. “I hope that my research is prominent and I look forward to presenting it this November in Lisbon, Portugal.”

“I hope this spurs more interest in visual studies for new generations and social media,” Čančar said. “We live in an overstimulated world, and people are not aware of the influence of images. Visualizations are changing the world as we know it and they have an amazing impact on younger generations.”

Following her defense, Stević has plans to start a Masters in Communication Science at the University of Vienna in Austria. Čančar, who is currently writing about the next Secretary General of the United Nations, has plans to join the European Parliament after his defense.
Graduate and undergraduate student interns from the Social Relations Collaborative meet to work on the School Safety Initiative.

(photo by Alan Burns)
When Does Rejection Trigger Aggression: The School Safety Project

A multi-faceted project entering its second year is seeking to understand when rejection leads to aggression in high school students. The School Safety Project, sponsored by the National Institute of Justice, has partnered with Starkville High School to study physical, verbal, relational, and cyber bullying.

by Alan Burns

Researchers at the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at Mississippi State University (MSU) are shedding new light on the topic of bullying in high schools.

The Reasons for Retaliation Research Project, more commonly called the School Safety Project, is heading into year two of the three-year study funded by the National Institute of Justice’s Comprehensive School Safety Initiative. The initiative seeks to increase the safety of schools and students across the nation by providing data-driven solutions.

The project is led by Dr. Colleen Sinclair, an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology. Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PI) on the project are Dr. Rebecca Goldberg, Dr. David May, Megan Stubbs-Richardson, and Dr. Tawny McCleon.

“We are examining when rejection leads to aggression,” said Sinclair, the Principal Investigator of the project. “We know from instances of school violence that it’s not uncommon for those who lash out at others to have a history of being rejected; however, many other people are rejected often and never violently last out.”

According to Sinclair, the project has four main goals which include: addressing the question “when does rejection trigger aggression?”, testing an untested theoretical model that alleges to explain why rejection leads to aggression, modifying the model to include new research on intergroup dynamics and social alienation, and conducting the study with a local sample of interest.

Dr. David May, Co-Principal Investigator and a Professor in the Department of Sociology, leads the team’s work with Starkville High School (SHS) and worked with them to coordinate their participation in the series of studies. Dr. Tawny McCleon, an Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology and Foundations, supervises the school psychology intern, Mr. Jabari Sellers, at SHS.

As a large focus of the Social Relations Collaborative (SRC), the SSRC-based laboratory conducting the study, collaborations inside the project were important. Collaborators on the project include the SSRC, MSU’s Department of Sociology, the Department of Psychology, the Department of Marketing, and the Department of Counseling, Education Psychology and Founda-
tions. Outside of MSU, the project is sponsored by the National Institute of Justice and registered on the Open Science Network, as well as partnered with Starkville High School.

Dr. Rebecca Goldberg, Co-Principal Investigator and Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology and Foundations, pointed out that the collaborations are a very big part of the project.

“This project is very interdisciplinary. We knew we needed different cogs for this machine, such as bringing in sociology, psychology, criminology, counseling, and marketing. This makes the project so much more impactful,” she said. She continued on the subject of the partnership with Starkville High School and the benefits it has for both the school and the project.

“We are able to bring in student interns from SHS to work in the SRC, as well as provide an internship site for students in the school psychology program at MSU. There were no local sites in the area for graduate students to intern and SHS had never had a school psychologist. This gave us a great opportunity to not only provide the high school with more help in mental health, but to also provide two to three graduate students with an internship,” said Goldberg.

One of the key factors of the project is applying Richman and Leary’s Multimotive Model, a theoretical model that seeks to categorize behaviors of those who encounter rejection. Along with the model, the study added two extra predictor variables, groupness and social alienation, of when rejection is more likely to lead to aggression. These additions have proven to be quite informative in the study.

During year one, the project team had 447 students take the survey which asked if the students had been a victim or perpetrator of the four types of bullying in the past six months; if so, the survey asked more questions regarding their experiences and feelings. The four main types of bullying that were looked at in the study are physical, verbal, relational, and cyber. At least half of the students reported experience with bullying or aggression in their school, with male students more likely to be a perpetrator or victim of physical and verbal bullying than female students.

Goldberg noted that the higher rate of male responses about relational aggression was interesting.
“Historically, when you look at the idea of relational aggression or bullying, it is thought to be more common among younger or teenage females, but that’s not what we’re seeing here.”

The added factor of perceived groupness, the perception of being part of a group or being targeted by a group, has proven to be important. Over half of students thought that they were a target of a social group on campus, while also believing that they were targeted because they were a member of a specific group. The results showed that this group factor also had an effect on likeliness to show aggression.

“Often, if we perceive that rejection is coming from someone in a group, that person’s hostile behavior is generalized to being representative of that specific group, allowing those targeted to generalize their animosity to the group as a whole. Similarly, we have this basic instinct to protect those who we perceive as part of our group, those who are close to us,” remarked Sinclair. “This makes us feel more justified in lashing out, or retaliating, if we think someone in our group is attacked. Thus, the intergroup dynamics of the bully incident are important to understand.”

One way that the project sharing information about bullying to the younger audience that is often victimized is through vlogging, video blogs posted to the project’s YouTube and social media accounts, as part of their multiplatform dissemination strategy.

Megan Stubbs-Richardson, Co-Principal Investigator and the vlog personality for the project, said that she was very excited for the vlogging going forward. The vlogs are put together by Stubbs-Richardson and Sierra Nelson, a graduate research assistant on the project.

“We knew we needed different cogs for this machine... This makes the project so much more impactful.”

- Dr. Rebecca Goldberg

“Replication for this type of study is very important,” said Sinclair. “We are hoping that the results that we get in year three help reinforce the results we received in year one.”

Moving forward into years two and three, the study will be trying to replicate their findings with a larger sample. There will also be new features added such as a possible video game simulation and vignettes that create scenarios for people to respond to. There will also be an expansion to the project’s vlogs.
A collaboration between the Social Science Research Center, the Mississippi State Extension Service and the Department of Communication is opening new doors in rural Mississippi; to be more specific, digital doors. The new project, titled the “Electronic-Front Door Initiative,” seeks to help rural communities manage their online reputations.

The idea for the project was developed by Dr. Ronald Cossman, Research Professor at the SSRC, who is joined by Dr. Roberto Gallardo, Associate Extension Professor, and Dr. John Forde, Professor and Head of the Department of Communication.

“E-Front Door is an MSU program designed to help Mississippi communities leap, not just enter, the digital age,” said Cossman. “People use the internet to map and plan trips, research companies, scope out cities and make dinner plans. To be competitive, Mississippi towns need to proactively manage their image on the web, in other words, their electronic front door.”

The program is implemented in a two phase process that uses student interns from the Department of Communication. In the first phase the students conduct a basic assessment of the community’s online image, as well as a “secret shopper” style trip to the community. After the information has been collected, a report is prepared for community leaders. In the second phase, the students create a plan with suggestions for moving forward in proactively managing the online reputation with hopes of the plan being implemented by local government, merchants, and community groups.

“We start by finding out what the websites look like, are they up to date? What is being said about these communities?” asked Cossman. “From there, we can take that information and show them what can be corrected or expanded upon, whether that is updating online maps, correcting information about the town or businesses, or posting revised dates for area events. Following that, we can begin to enhance and add original web content while trying to maintain this online image.”

This past fall, the project launched a pilot phase with Quitman, Mississippi. The student interns spent time learning about Quitman through research, an online audit, and a city visit, before meeting with the town leaders to present their findings. The internship offered the students a great opportunity to pick up skills and experience that can be applied after graduation.

“We help these students gain field experience and real practice on the public relations side, which is a great chance for them. They're the ones who are growing up to be the experts in this area, so it is a wonderful opportunity,” said Dr. Gallardo.
When asked about the potential of the program for the Department of Communication, Dr. Forde was excited about the opportunities it is providing both to his students and the communities around the state.

"I'm very excited about this program and having our students work with various city leaders and campus colleagues. It has allowed our majors to understand how important it is for cities and organizations in general to have a positive and true online identity. This type of project can help leaders realize how their online presence can impact businesses, potential new residents, economic development, tourism, and virtually every aspect of communities," said Forde.

This fall, the E-Front Door project is gearing up to assess three communities simultaneously. The three original interns will now serve as mentors for the new interns hired to help with the larger project.

William Folkes, Chandler Gurley, and Becca Hawkins, all seniors in the Department of Communication, were the first interns and look forward to training the next team.

"The E-Front Door internship provided me with an opportunity to gain valuable research experience, while also allowing me to make a small positive impact on the state I love," said Folkes. "Through this internship I also met new colleagues that I now sincerely call my friends."

For Dr. Gallardo, this is a great chance for communities to become proactive and ultimately benefit the entire state of Mississippi.

"We see this as a grassroots effort that collectively will benefit Mississippi," he said. "If someone searches for Mississippi cities, it will show that we are actively managing our reputations online. It all starts with awareness in these communities, and that's what we're aiming to achieve."
Flint Water Crisis: Using Social Media in Disaster Management

At almost three and a half million active users, Twitter has become a driving force in today’s media and news. Researchers at the SSRC are publishing a new textbook chapter on the implications of data collected via Twitter to aid in disaster response.

by Alan Burns

Today, news media, disaster relief, and views on a national critical events can be expressed in just 140 characters. A new book chapter authored by researchers at the Social Science Research Center looks at the impact of social media in the recent Flint Water Crisis.

Implications of Social Media on Disaster Response: Commentary on the Flint Twitterverse, authored by Gina Rico Mendez, Megan Stubbs-Richardson, Somya Mohanty, and Arthur Cosby, will be featured in an upcoming, untitled book. The book, which focuses on research into the Flint Water Crisis, is being edited by
Drs. Tonya Neaves, Director of the Centers on the Public Service at George Mason University, and Bonnie Stable, Research Assistant Professor at GMU’s Schar School of Policy and Government. The book will be published this coming spring.

The Flint Water Crisis, which occurred in Flint, Michigan and became wide-spread in the media in early 2016, was started after the city began drawing its water supply from the Flint River in 2014. Drinking water was found to contain high levels of lead, which had negative impacts on the public’s health, especially children in the area. This led to a State of Emergency being declared in the city.

Using SMTAS, the Social Media Tracking and Analysis System at the SSRC, the group was able to collect 2.5 million Tweets surrounding the Flint Water Crisis during January and February in 2016.

Twitter, a social media, microblogging platform launched in 2006, allows people to post updates, or Tweets, in a maximum of 140 characters. Tweets can contain hashtags, which allow for the grouping of Tweets around a specific subject matter. Using these hashtags and keywords, the group was able to create a “Twitterverse” to study.

“We created a Twitterverse that looked at the discussions happening before, during, and after the crisis,” said Mendez, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the SSRC and lead author on the chapter. “The almost two months of data that we collected allowed us to create clusters using hashtags and keywords, which was very important to see how the discussion was happening,” she said.

Big data analytics were performed in the project, examining dates and times, Twitter trends, Klout scores, and network analyses. Three major themes were naturally occurring in the Twitterverse: organizing humanitarian responses, government accountability and citizen participation, and social justice.

A large portion of the Tweets collected focused on organization of aid and humanitarian responses, such as collecting resources, help, and donations.

Mendez noted, “All of these people that were trying to organize and provide help were not necessarily in Flint, but all over the nation. We're seeing that social media has the ability to help people organize for causes and respond to disasters at such a large level.”

Stubbs-Richardson, a Research Fellow at the SSRC, stated that ultimately the data showed that social media, even while having some drawbacks, can be extremely useful in expanding discussion of topics and political debate.

“Twitter, and other social media platforms, are giving a voice to the people that are being affected by situations, in real time,” she said. “From this we can learn how people react to crises, how it can be used to organize help, and become a tool for enhancing community resilience.”

Dr. Arthur Cosby, Director Emeritus of the SSRC, said that he feels the chapter will help show today’s data intensive society represents a paradigmatic shift in the way humans interact and manage collective action.

“By analyzing critical events such as the Flint Water Crisis through Twitter, we are gathering evidence of the importance of social media, not only in mediating human communication, but potentially enhancing collective action throughout self-organizing behavior,” said Cosby.
Mississippi Data Project

The three-year Mississippi Data Project will focus on delivering data concerning health, education, and economic well-being of children and their families to grantees and state level agencies. The data will be viewed through a racial equity and civic engagement lens and presented in a variety of formats including infographics, policy briefs, and GIS mapping.

by Alan Burns

A new project at the Social Science Research Center aims to enhance data-driven decision making in promoting best practices and policies for children and families in Mississippi. The Mississippi Data Project (MDP), funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), will bring together data on family, children, and communities from different state agencies into an easy to use website and data platform.

The MDP is being led by Co-Principal Investigators Drs. Connie Baird-Thomas, Director of the Mississippi Health Policy Research Center and Deputy Director of the Myrlie Evers-Williams Institute for the Elimination of Health Disparities, and Linda Southward, Coordinator of the Family and Children Research Unit and Director Mississippi KIDS COUNT.

The three-year project will serve as a nexus for the WKKF’s community level, place-based, state level grantees as well as provide a resource for agencies and organizations that address issues related to children and families in Mississippi. The data will allow the MDP to focus on indicators such as health, education, and economic well-being of children and their families through a racial equity and civic engagement lens.

“One of the major goals of the project is to create a central website that will provide the data in an easily accessible manner. This data will also be used to create infographics, charts, policy briefs, and information about best practices and policy models to be used by WKKF grantees and communities.”

Baird-Thomas stressed that the website and data will be presented in a manageable, useful, and visually appealing format for policy and community-based decisions makers.

“It is the intent of this project to make data easily available so that community based organizations, policy makers and anyone else who is interested in improving the conditions of families and children in the State will have factual, objective information on which to base programmatic and policy decisions.”

Ben Walker, a research associate at the SSRC, explained that this can be an asset to state agencies.

“I think a strength of this project is that it has the potential to serve as a resource to state agencies and decision-makers to enhance the capacity of those agencies to make more data-driven decisions and in turn positively impact Mississippi’s families, children, and communities,” he said.
ABOVE: The team for the Mississippi Data Project. From left to right: Linda Southward, Anna Zollicoffer, Connie Baird-Thomas, Layne Smith, Laure Bell, Lisa Long, Colleen Harris, Ben Walker, and John McCown. BELOW LEFT: The logo for the Mississippi Data Project. BELOW RIGHT: Courtney Carothers and Layne Smith work on upcoming graphics for the Mississippi Data Project.
Gender Equity & Soybean Farmers in Rural Ghana

by Alan Burns & Kathleen Ragsdale
The Northern Region is both the largest and poorest region of Ghana, with both food security and gender equity problems. The Soybean Innovation Laboratory, along with the Socioeconomic and Gender Equity Research team, seeks to address these global food security issues. Led by Kathleen Ragsdale of the Social Science Research Center, the SGER team is hoping to make an impact across the world.

Located in West Africa, Ghana could almost be called a second home for Kathleen Ragsdale. In recent years, Ragsdale, an associate research professor at the Social Science Research Center, has made five trips to Ghana working as a Co-Principal Investigator on the Feed the Future Soybean Innovation Lab (SIL), which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The SIL is one of 24 Feed the Future Innovations Labs led by U.S. universities to address global food security and under nutrition. Ragsdale leads the Socioeconomic and Gender Equity Research (SGER) team on the SIL, which is about midway through a five-year project concentrated in five countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The SIL has ten research areas that are directed by Mississippi State University and four other U.S. universities. These research areas include, for example, plant breeding, crop quality, human and livestock nutrition, and gender and socioeconomic impacts. Ragsdale's research focuses on how socioeconomic and gender factors impact men and women rural farmers differently. This is important among rural farmers in the Sub-Saharan countries where the SIL works, because women farmers rarely have the same access to extension agents, agriculture inputs (e.g., seed, fertilizer and new technologies–like cell phones), lines of credit, etc., than their male counterparts. In fact, in many parts of the world, women farmers still lack the right to purchase or even inherit their own farmlands.

Ragsdale's work is focused on men and women who are rural ‘smallholder’ farmers. Described as “the backbone of African agriculture and food security,” (FAO, 2004) a smallholder farmer is someone who farms less than 5 acres, which is about the size of a football field.

“This work in rural Ghana is some of the most exciting research I’ve ever been involved in, since we are working to help transition men and women farmers towards better food security and nutrition for their children” said Ragsdale. “One of the advantages of soybean in Ghana is that it’s both valued as a cash crop and as a nutritious food for growing children. This is especially important in the Northern Region where we work, because it is both the largest and poorest region in Ghana.”
An important achievement of the SIL was conducting the WEAI+ survey among nearly 700 hundred men and women farmers in the Northern Region in 2014. Ragsdale and the SGER team adapted the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) to make it culturally appropriate for Ghanaian farmers and added Soybean Modules to collect baseline data on how local farmers were cultivating soy.

Another important achievement of the SIL was delivering 2,500 Soybean Success Kits to Northern Region farmers in March-April 2015. The motto for the Soybean Success Kits is ‘Eat Some, Save Some, Sell Some.’ In September 2015, Ragsdale and Mary Read-Wahidi—an SSRC postdoctoral fellow and SGER member—toured soybean fields with U.S. and Ghanaian plant scientists to see how the Soybean Success Kit seed was growing. On this trip, Ragsdale and Read-Wahidi conducted interviews and a focus group with women farmers to find out how they were putting the Success Kit motto into practice.

“In terms of ‘Eat Some,’ the moms we’ve talked to are excited about growing their own soy to bolster nutrition for their kids. In terms of ‘Save Some,’ these same moms said they are definitely saving back some of the soy crop they’ve grown from Success Kits so they’ll have high quality seed for planting their next crop, and the next, and the next. And in terms of ‘Sell Some,’ we went back to the villages this summer [2015] to ask men and women farmers about how they’re networking both within their villages to market their soy crops, as well as beyond their villages.”

On this three-week trip, Ragsdale and Audrey Reid—an SSRC research assistant on the project—were in the Northern Region during June-July 2016 to train four survey teams and implement the Soybean Uptake and Network Survey (SUNS) in 12 villages. They trained the surveyors and conducted the SUNS in collaboration with their in-country partner, Catholic Relief Services-Ghana (CRS).

“The SUNS allows us to take a closer and more specific look at soybean production three years into the project,” said Read-Wahidi, who collaborated with Ragsdale, CRS, and colleagues at the University of Missouri to develop the SUNS. “This will give us an idea of what soybean production in our study region currently looks like and what specific problems farmers may be facing. We can then compare this to the previous data we collected as well as any future data we [will] collect so that we can track changes over time.”

For the SUNS, Ragsdale’s team asked farmers typical “agric” questions, like the size of a farmer’s soy plot and the soybean yield he or she had gotten from that plot. But Ragsdale’s team also came up with a number of important ‘let’s think outside the box’ questions related to growing and consuming soy.

“Oh my favorite questions are ‘How well did your soy plot’s yield meet your expectations?’ and ‘How well did the income from your soy plot meet your expectations?’” said Ragsdale. “We also asked farmers a series of unique questions that zeroed-in on men and women farmers’ attitudes about consuming soy. These were inspired by our colleagues at USAID, and included questions like, ‘Do you think soy is a nutritious food?’ ‘Do you think soy is a tasty food?’ and ‘Do you think soy is easy to prepare into soy foods your children will eat?’ I’m really looking forward to diving into the SUNS data to find out how folks answered these ‘Eat Some’ questions.

Ragsdale, Reid and CRS trained the four survey teams on using iPads to collect the SUNS, which was so effective that 16 surveyors were able to collect 820 surveys in remote villages in just three weeks. Reid, who was traveling internationally for the first time, remarked on the people and culture in Ghana, along with those that helped with the work.

“I was just in awe of the people,” she said. “They were phenomenal, entrepreneurial, and motivated. The enumerators had unbelievable work ethic; the whole experience was eye-opening.”
Along with the SUNS, Ragsdale’s team explored farmers’ gaps in Information and Communication Technology for Agricultural (ICT4Ag) through informal focus groups among separate groups of men and women soybean farmers. ICT4Ag is focused on using technology to encourage more rapid uptake of agricultural innovations among small-scale farmers around the world. Ragsdale wanted to find out more about what kind of extension training Ghanaian farmers need, how they get their weather information, who owned cell phones, and how they used cell phones to get important agric information, like current crop prices.

“My working hypothesis was that men farmers have more access to cell phones as well as extension experts and new technologies,” said Ragsdale. “And it turned out that seven out of eight men in the first men’s focus group had cell phones—although only one had a smart phone. In contrast, only four out of 11 women in the first women’s focus group had cell phones—and none had a smart phone.” Overall, the men soy farmers in the focus groups had much greater access to cell phones, with 91% of males having access compared to 60% of women.

“It is so great when we make the trips to see how this project is unfolding and the progress that is being made in these communities,” said Ragsdale.
Partnerships to Promote Healthy Lifestyles for Children & Communities

A partnership can be a strong tie that leads to impactful work. Promoting healthy lifestyles and addressing obesity issues were two goals of a recent five-year project at the Social Science Research Center with partnerships at its core.

by Alan Burns

A five-year project at the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) that aimed to promote healthy lifestyles and increase knowledge of obesity issues in Mississippi is coming to a close. The Partnerships to Promote Healthy Lifestyles for Children and Communities project, funded through a Science Education Partnership Award from the National Institutes of Health, was started in 2011 by Dr. Ginger Cross, an Assistant Research Professor with the Family and Children Research Unit of the SSRC and Dr. Chiquita Briley, an Associate Professor in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences at Tennessee State University.

“The overall goal of our project was to promote healthy lifestyles by educating young children, their parents, teachers, and community members about topics related to obesity,” said Cross. “This is particularly important in Mississippi, where our rates of childhood and adult obesity are consistently among the highest in the country. We decided to focus on young children – those in pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten – to try to establish healthy habits as well as build a foundation for STEM education at an early age.”

“We realized that young children’s behaviors and choices are influenced by their environment so we also wanted to provide information and resources to their parents, teachers, and community members. We were extremely fortunate to build upon a partnership with the Health Care Foundation of North Mississippi and HealthWorks! North Mississippi while being able to take advantage of the wonderful resources and expertise available at MSU – from the SSRC’s Survey Research Laboratory and Media Communication Laboratory (MCL) to faculty member colleagues in other MSU Departments.”

Included in the partnership were researchers from Mississippi State University’s Social Science Research Center, School of Human Sciences, Department of Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion, and Department of Communication; staff from HealthWorks! North Mississippi, an interactive children’s health education center in Tupelo, MS and the Health Care Foundation of North MS; and Dr. Edward Hill, a family physician with over 45 years of medical practice and host of WTVA’s 60 second Housecall television program.

These partnerships have been key in the success of the NIH-funded project, but have also supported the mission and goals of the partners as well, said Cross.

Dean Hancock, the president of the Health Care Foundation of North Mississippi, saw the project as great way to improve health education in Mississippi.
“Efforts to manage health care delivery from a national level are ongoing, but the planning and delivery of successful programs that actually work to improve population health remain very much local. Our successful partnership with the SSRC and the Partnerships to Promote Healthy Lifestyles for Children and Communities project has been invaluable toward our goal of affecting positive changes in children’s health education in communities and schools throughout our region,” he said.

According to Kathy Tucker, the “Seamstress of Strategy” or Director at HealthWorks! North Mississippi, this has been a great opportunity in pursuing their mission of encouraging learning and imparting health education resources for children and parents to make better life choices.

Tucker stated, “Our collaboration with the SSRC and the Partnerships to Promote Healthy Lifestyles for Children and Communities project has been a valuable tool in pursuing the HW! mission in Northeast Mississippi.”

Targeting a 20 county area in northeast Mississippi, the project’s main goal was to increase knowledge of obesity issues among pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students using various tools. A needs assessment was conducted across northeast Mississippi, which resulted in the development of a two-week school-based curriculum, a family activity book which allowed children to do additional activities and games with parents and family members to reinforce what they were learning in their classrooms, and a field trip program to HealthWorks! which also reinforced information they were learning at school. Over the course of the project approximately 3,000 children participated in the program.
The “WannaBee Healthy” integrated school curriculum promoted health-related science education and taught children science practices like asking questions, making predictions and interpreting data as well as math concepts like sorting and counting, using content relevant to nutrition and physical activity. For example, children were asked to sort foods into their food groups, count the number of fruits and vegetables, and make predictions, collect and interpret data about the fruits and vegetables that would be the favorites for their classmates in the cafeteria that week.

The curriculum revolved around three bee characters to help the children remember the 3 key messages. Sunny Smart Bee taught them to “Be Smart” about their food choices, Andy Active Bee taught them to “Be Active” and make their hearts beat faster, and LaToya Leader Bee taught them to “Be a Leader” and share what they learned about being healthy with others.

Dr. Julie Parker, from MSU’s School of Human Sciences was a key member of the project team and took the lead in the development of the classroom-based curriculum along with Ms. Lisa Long from MSU’s SSRC.

“The WannaBee Healthy bees were used to introduce the children to health principles. Young children are usually engaged by characters in stories; the bee characters were designed for this curriculum to set the stage for important learning experiences. They worked to educate and challenge the children to think about their choices, make wiser choices, and share what they learned,” said Parker.

To assess the impact of the school curriculum, family booklet, and field trip, child assessments were conducted with students from the participating schools. A pre- and post-test design was used to gauge the impact of the program on students’ knowledge of foods and activities that are both healthy and unhealthy.

“For children this age, our project team developed hands-on assessments that would measure their knowledge of things like food group classifications, food origins, healthy and unhealthy foods, and activities that make their hearts beat faster,” said Cross.

In order to measure the impact of the program on students’ knowledge, there was both an intervention and a comparison group. While both groups received the curriculum, the family booklet, and went on the field trip, only the intervention group did so between the two test dates. Over all three semesters of the assessments, students in the intervention group (who did the curriculum, the family booklet and the field trip between their two tests) showed significantly greater improvement between the two tests compared to those in the comparison group.

A secondary goal of increasing knowledge of obesity issues in the general public was also pursued. This included working with the SSRC’s MCL and other Departments at MSU to develop media releases, video and audio public service announcements, and faith-based bulletin inserts that were distributed to the communities. The project also worked with NMMC and Dr. Hill to develop two weeks of 60 Second Housecall segments related to the project’s focus areas.

Overall, the project was seen as a success with a positive impact being observed in the pre and post assessments and in information provided from families and teachers about observations at school and at home.

“The results of our child assessments suggest that the curriculum, family booklet, and field trip program had an impact on children’s knowledge of nutrition and physical activity topics. And, information gathered from parents and teachers suggests that the knowledge they are acquiring is being applied in school and home settings,” Cross said in closing. “Overall, with the help of our project partners and MSU colleagues, I believe we achieved our goal of promoting healthy habits in young children and building a foundation for STEM education.”
Two children use the FarmWorks exhibit at HealthWorks! North Mississippi. (photo by Alan Burns)
The Wolfgang Frese Survey Research Laboratory (SRL) has had another productive year. In addition to collecting data for several longitudinal research projects related to general quality of life, the use and control of tobacco-based products, and the health and welfare of children, the SRL conducted some important surveys that focused on special populations. These projects included surveying Directors of childcare facilities throughout the nation and various stakeholders involved in mediating the long-term effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Lastly, the SRL conducted a novel survey that measured Mississippian's general understanding of wildlife conservation and their interactions with wildlife. The following is a list of all survey projects conducted by the SRL during the past fiscal year:

**Northwest Arkansas Quality of Life Survey**
On behalf of The Walton Family Foundation, the SRL conducted a survey of the perceived quality of life in Northwest Arkansas that included measures related to health, safety, education, community activities, and the quality of local services. This telephone-based survey was administered to a representative sample of 1,000 adults residing in Benton and Washington Counties, Arkansas.

**The Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill Outreach Program Stakeholders Survey**
The SRL conducted a stakeholders’ opinion survey of behalf of the Sea Grant Oil Spill Outreach program. The purpose of this program is to disseminate oil spill science to a wide range of individuals from various industries and backgrounds. The SRL conducted telephone-based interviews with stakeholders from 13 job sectors, including industries such as: Commercial fishing, for-hire fishing, recreational fishing, tourism-dependent businesses, ports and harbors, elected officials, natural resource managers, emergency responders, environmental non-profit staff, university researchers, and Sea Grant extension and outreach personnel. The respondents worked in one of the four regions (Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi/Alabama, and Texas) in which the Sea Grant Oil Spill Outreach program operates. Results from this survey assisted in program evaluation and development.

**2015 National Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control**
For the Tobacco Control Unit at the Social Science Research Center, the SRL administered the 2015 National Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control. Results from this survey assist researchers in better understanding the degree to which people in the US live in smoke free homes, work in smoke free environments, understand the health risks of tobacco, dine in smoke free restaurants, and talk to their children about tobacco use. The Tobacco Control Unit secured funding for this research through the American Academy of Pediatrics. This telephone-based survey was administered to a representative sample of 1,500 adults in the US.

**2015 Mississippi Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control**
For the Tobacco Control Unit at the Social Science Research Center, the SRL administered the 2015 Mississippi Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control. Results from this survey assist researchers in better understanding the degree to which people in Mississippi live in smoke free homes, work in smoke free environments, understand the health risks of tobacco, dine in smoke free restaurants, and talk to their children about tobacco use. The Tobacco Control Unit secured funding for this research through the Mississippi State Department of Health. This telephone-based survey was administered to a representative sample of 1,500 Mississippi residents.
2015 Mississippi Vocational Rehabilitation Client Survey
On behalf of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), the SRL administered the 2015 Vocational Rehabilitation Client Satisfaction Survey. On a quarterly basis, the SRL conducted telephone-based interviews with approximately 250 individuals who received vocational rehabilitation services from MDRS during the prior 12 months. This client satisfaction data assists MDRS in program evaluation and development.

National Survey of Childcare Centers
On behalf of the Family & Children Research Unit (FCRU) at the Social Science Research Center, the SRL conducted telephone-based interviews with a representative sample of 500 Directors of Childcare Centers throughout the nation. Data from this survey assisted researchers in creating educational materials to help the childcare community be better prepared for a pandemic outbreak of influenza. The FCRU secured funding for this research through the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Mississippi Health Children Survey
On behalf of the Partnerships to Promote Healthy Lifestyles for Children and Communities at the Social Science Research Center, the SRL conducted a general population survey with a representative sample of 500 adults living in a twenty county catchment area in Mississippi. Data from this survey assisted researchers in better understanding the health status, practices, knowledge, and views on children's health by the population of residents living in the catchment area. The Partnerships to Promote Healthy Lifestyles for Children and Communities is funded through a grant from the National Institutes of Health.

Wildlife Value Orientations Survey
On behalf of the Central Mississippi Research & Extension Center, the SRL administered the Wildlife Value Orientation Survey. Researchers designed a survey questionnaire to better understand public attitudes, beliefs, and interactions with wildlife. The instrument included a scientifically-based measure of human values toward wildlife, a construct known as wildlife value orientation. This telephone-based survey was administered to a representative sample of 1,200 Mississippi residents.

Lower Mississippi Delta Outdoor Recreation & Activity Survey
On behalf of the Mississippi Lower Delta Partnership, the SRL conducted a general population survey to better understand how often and for what reasons individuals visit private and public recreation facilities. The survey respondents included a representative sample of 600 adults residing in the Lower Delta region of Mississippi. The catchment area included Hinds, Madison, Warren, Washington, and Yazoo counties.
Grants & Contracts

Total Funding: $13,474,139

- Ongoing Extramural Projects $4,106,374
- SSRC Labs $425,164
- Core Funding Projects $765,279
- New Extramural Projects $5,611,656
- Loftin Fellowship and Foundation Support $97,287
- Marion T. Loftin Endowment $708,597
- MASEP $1,759,782
New Grants & Contracts:


New Grants & Contracts (continued):


Ongoing Grants & Contracts:


Grants & Contracts


Ragsdale, K. (2014, October). “USAID,” University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Feed the Future Soybean Innovation Laboratory, United States Agency for International Development.


Mississippi KIDS COUNT. (2016). County Legislative Attendance Factsheets. Factsheets detailing data and information relevant to early education and chronic absence in Mississippi. Factsheets were distributed to members of the Mississippi State Legislature in June 2016. Available at: http://kidscount.ssrc.msstate.edu/data/mississippi-kids-count/county-fact-sheets/.


The Social Relations Collaborative School Safety Initiative launched their first School Safety Vlog, When Does Rejection Trigger Aggression: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZH2Ycr5ZDk.


Barr, F. E., Southward, L. H. (2016, April 15). Children’s Health and Development Project. Presentation to visiting staff from the offices of Senator Thad Cochran and Senator Roger Wicker. Social Science Research Center, Starkville, MS.


Buffington, A. & Mckee, C. (2015). TRAPS training presentation. Presented at the MSU CAVS Center in Canton, MS to the Mississippi Tobacco Free Coalition directors and project officers.


Cosby, A. G. (2016, April). The Emergence of a Data Intensive Society: The Opportunity for SURA to Provide Leadership in Developing Fundamental Breakthroughs in Integrative Modeling of Natural and Human Systems. Presented at the Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA) - Coastal and Environmental Research Committee (CERC), Raleigh, NC.


Farrell, B. & Burns, M. A. (2015). Data Drive Approaches to Community Education: Changing Culture,
Presentations


Janzen, T., McMillen, R., Martin, B. (2016). Down and Dirty: A Targeted Intervention to Reach High Risk Youth. Presentation presented at the 8th National Summit on Smokeless and Spit Tobacco, Albuquerque, NM.


Presentations


Robertson, A. A., & Walker, C. (October 31 – November 2, 2015). Racial Differences in College Student Alcohol Use. Poster presentation at the 143rd Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, Chicago, IL.


Presentations


Awards & Recognitions

Ms. Anne Buffington was recognized as Mississippi State University’s Outstanding Professional Staff Woman for 2016. The award was presented by the President’s Commission on the Status of Women during a campus ceremony on April 6th.

Dr. Arthur Cosby was added to the editorial board for the Media Studies Journal (Medijske Studije) published by the Faculty of Political Science of University of Zagreb and the Croatian Communication Association. The journal provides an interdisciplinary forum for the publication of research of communication and information sciences. For more information visit the journal’s website at http://www.mediastudies.fpzg.hr/.

Dr. Ronald E. Cossman was awarded the Excellence in Research award by the Clute Institute for his work on the manuscript entitled “College Students’ Sense of Cycling Capability Deters Helmet Use: Implications for Safety Helmet Ordinances.”

Dr. Ginger Cross received the MAFES Grantsmanship Award on March 29, 2016. The award is given to the MAFES scientist with the greatest total extramural awards for the calendar year.

Dr. Ginger Cross’ “Partnerships to Promote Healthy Lifestyles for Children and Communities” project was featured on the Agriculture is America website on March 28th for National Nutrition Month. To read the full article: http://agisamerica.org/news/national-nutrition-month-nutritious-meals-worth-time-money/.

EMPOWR is one of four Access to Opportunity grants sponsored by the Women’s Foundation of Mississippi. A recently released case studies report, “Building Women’s Economic Security through Community College-Based Programs” highlights the successes and challenges for each of the grantees. Anne Buffington directs the project which is based at East Mississippi Community College-Golden Triangle campus.

MASEP has been added to SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices. NREPP has just under 200 substance abuse interventions available for implementation. They have been recognized as a program with a promising justice involvement outcome. You can find the program description and snapshot on NREPP’s website below: http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/ProgramProfile.aspx?id=21#hide1.

Dr. Robert McMillen was featured in WCBI’s “Are E-Cigarettes A Healthy Alternative To Cigarettes?” Available at: http://www.wcbi.com/local-news/are-e-cigarettes-a-healthy-alternative-to-cigarettes/.

Mississippi Tobacco Data project of the SSRC, the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association, the American Heart Association, The Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi, and the Mississippi Department of Health, hosted a reception at the Mississippi Municipal Leagues Annual Conference for these municipalities that passed a local ordinance during the past year. Mississippi won the nationwide American Nonsmokers Right’s Smoke Free Air Challenge for passing the most local smoke free laws in a calendar year.

Pathfinders won the Housing, Residence Life, Contracted Services, Judicial, and related Excellence Award from NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. The award category recognizes the outstanding contributions of members who provide innovative and transformative experiences to students in community on their campuses.

Dr. Kathleen Ragsdale served as a manuscript reviewer for the Journal of Social Science & Medicine and for the Journal of Family & Community Health.

Dr. Kathleen Ragsdale’s international research was featured in an article appearing in the October issue of Mississippi LandMarks, a quarterly magazine published by the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University. Entitled Equity for Women Farmers Helps Feed the World, the article highlights the work of Dr. Ragsdale and Dr. Jill Findeis (University of Missouri) as Co-PIs on the Socioeconomic Research arm of the USAID-funded Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Soybean Value Chain Research (Soybean Innovation Lab), which is led by Dr. Peter Goldsmith (University of Illinois, Urbana–Champaign). The full article is available at http://www.dafvm.msstate.edu/landmarks/15/oct2015.pdf.

Dr. Kathleen Ragsdale and Dr. Mary Read-Wahidi were highlighted on the University of Ghana’s website for their Feed the Future Soybean Innovation Lab research presentation at the university on September 30, 2015. The blog is titled, “Mississippi State University Faculty Present Research Findings at UGBS” and is available at http://ugbs.ug.edu.gh/news/mississippi-state-university-faculty-present-research-findings-ugbs.
Dr. Kathleen Ragsdale and Dr. Mary Read-Wahidi were featured in Seed World magazine's International Agricultural Development section in a column written by Dennis Thompson titled, “She Just Laughed.” The column highlighted their Feed the Future Soybean Innovation Lab research and is available at http://seedworld.com/she-just-laughed/.

Dr. Angela Robertson was appointed to serve a 3-year term on the Commission on Children's Justice by the Supreme Court of Mississippi. This Commission is charged with developing a statewide, comprehensive approach to improving the child welfare system; coordinating the three branches of government in assessing the impact of government actions on children who are abused or neglected; and recommending changes to improve children's safety, to strengthen and support families, and to restore public trust and confidence in the child welfare system.

The Social Relations Collaborative work was part of the Psychology Replication project that was nominated in the “Breakthrough of the Year” award from Science Magazine.

The Social Relations Collaborative work was part of the Psychology Replication project that was featured in Discover Magazine's top 100 Science stories of the year at #8.

Ms. Amber Stewart and Mr. Alan Burns received a Bulldog PRism Award of Excellence from the Starkville/MSU Chapter of the Public Relations Association of Mississippi (PRAM) for the 2015 SSRC Annual Report.

Ms. Amber Stewart and Mr. Alan Burns received a Certificate of Merit Award from the Public Relations Association of Mississippi on April 7th for their submission of the 2015 SSRC Annual Report.

Mrs. Megan Stubbs-Richardson and Ms. Sierra Nelson were awarded Loftin funding for travel and tuition expenses for the Seminar on Immigration, which is jointly hosted by the Social Science Research Center of Mississippi State University, George Mason University, and the University of Zagreb.

Mrs. Courtney Walker was chosen by Office of Research and Economic Development, Centers and Institutes, to receive the 2016 Graduate Student Research Award.

In April, the Social Science Research Center awarded 9 students with Marion T. Loftin Scholarships. The Marion T. Loftin fund is an endowment provided by Dr. Loftin. Dr. Loftin was a Sociologist, Department Head, Dean of the Graduate School, and Vice President of Research at Mississippi State University. The Loftin scholarships promote social science research by supporting sociology graduate student's education and research at Mississippi State University. A total of $12,976.00 was awarded this spring. The Marion T. Loftin scholarships were awarded to the following recipients:

- **Madison Hinton** – Data Collection Award for qualitative data collection equipment.
- **Ismail Yigit** – Travel support to the American Sociological Association Conference to present at a roundtable session.
- **Adriene Davis** – Travel support to the American Sociological Association Conference to present at a roundtable session.
- **Andrew Tatch** – Travel support to the American Sociological Association Conference to present at a roundtable session.
- **Jeannice Louine** – Travel support to the American Sociological Association Conference.
- **Sara Pellegrine** – Travel support to the ACJS Conference.
- **Ismail Yigit** – Methodological workshop/training to attend the ICPSR Summer Program in Hierarchical Linear Methods.
- **Benjamin Walker** – Methodological workshop/training to attend the ICPSR Summer Program on Latent Growth Curve Modeling in Chapel Hill, NC.
- **Andrew Tatch** – Methodological workshop/training to attend the ICPSR Sum Session on Longitudinal Data Analysis, Including Categorical Outcomes.
Special Collaborative Partnerships

The productivity of the SSRC Scientists remains high and the support from extramural organizations is quite varied. Our research benefits from awards and partnerships from the following:

American Academy of Pediatrics  
Annie E. Casey Foundation  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
E Q Health Solutions  
Federal Motor Carriers  
Flight Attendant Medical Research Institute  
Harvard Law School  
Harvard School of Public Health  
National Center for Intermodal Transportation  
National Institute of Corrections  
National Institutes of Health  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
National Science Foundation  
New York Sea Grant  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
Southeastern Universities Research Association  

Tec de Monterrey, Mexico  
Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
U.S. Department of Justice  
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences  
University of Split, Croatia  
University of Zagreb, Croatia  
W.K. Kellogg Foundation  
Washington University

Within Mississippi, the SSRC has partnerships with and/or funding from the following:

Blue Cross & Blue Shield Foundation of Mississippi  
The Bower Foundation  
Center for Mississippi Health Policy  
Health Care Foundation of North Mississippi  
Healthy Mississippi  
Mississippi Alcohol Safety Education Program  
Mississippi Area Health Education Center  
Mississippi Attorney General's Office  
Mississippi Association of Grantmakers  
Mississippi Center for Education  
Mississippi Center for Justice  
Mississippi Department of Education  
Mississippi Department of Health  
Mississippi Department of Human Services  
Mississippi Department of Medicaid  
Mississippi Department of Mental Health  
Mississippi Department of Public Safety  
Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services  
Mississippi Department of Transportation  
Mississippi Division of Public Safety Planning  
Mississippi Health and Advocacy Program  
Mississippi Health Care Association  
Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning  
Mississippi Non-profits  
Mississippi Office of Highway Safety  
North Mississippi Medical Center  
Office of Research and Economic Development  
Mississippi State Department of Health, Office of Tobacco Control  
Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi  
Preusser Research Group, Inc.  
Southern Research Group  
University of Mississippi Medical Center  
William Winters Institute for Racial Reconciliation  
Women's Foundation of Mississippi
Discrimination based upon race, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status is a violation of federal and state law and MSU policy and will not be tolerated. Discrimination based upon sexual orientation or group affiliation is a violation of MSU policy and will not be tolerated.