

FALL 2023

FORUM

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MID-SOUTH
SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.



Mid-South Sociological Association, Inc.

Organizational Statement

The Mid-South Sociological Association, Inc. (MSSA, Inc.), founded in 1975, is a 501-C(3) non-profit organization providing both professional support to, and a forum for sociologists who teach, conduct research and reside in the Mid-South region of the US. Through its publications, annual conference, academic support and collegial networks, MSSA, Inc. promotes the advancement of sociological research, the diffusion of knowledge, innovative service and teaching. From its inception, MSSA, Inc. has been and continues to be committed to mentoring and enabling the growth of the next generation of sociologists in the value of high-quality research and engagement, and ethical, professional service.



MSSA, Inc. Inclusion Statement

The Mid-South Sociological Association Inc. embraces diversity and promotes inclusion by recruiting, including, and valuing people of all races, genders and gender identities, sexualities, ethnicities, religions, economic and employment statuses, abilities, and other dimensions. The MSSA celebrates all expressions of diversity and identity and strives to provide an environment conducive to free expression of ideas without fear of judgment in any way. Moreover, the MSSA does not tolerate any action from any member or conference participant that encourages or promotes hatred and/or intolerance in any form. Further, to the extent that the Board determines that it is not detrimental to the best interests (financial and otherwise) of the association, the MSSA will use the economic power of the annual conferences and other activities to select locations and enter into agreements with businesses that have policies and practices that reflect the values of the MSSA.

Introducing this edition, a recap from New Orleans, and a few important thoughts

Written by: Andrew Tatch

As we enter into December, that means we have completed yet another annual meeting of the Mid-South Sociological Association. And, if you came, you would have recognized this meeting looked a little different than meetings we have had in the past. As an organization, we opted to try a different format—one that might allow a bit more flexibility in terms of spending, in efforts to make our organization more economically sustainable. So, rather than hold the conference at a hotel or convention center, the standard at least since I have been coming in 2014, we held our annual conference at Dillard University in beautiful New Orleans. At the awards banquet and business meeting, it was brought up that this was the first time the MSSA has held their annual meeting on an HBCU campus!

What did you think about being hosted on campus instead of a hotel? As I mentioned in the last edition, I was excited to try something different. Rather than being tied down with expensive hotel contracts and costly hotel rooms, I liked the idea of our organization being able to put our money where our collective mouths are: as a discipline and organization whose focus broadly focuses on social inequality and social reform efforts, there is something about the optics of staying in nice hotels and eating \$30 meals while presenting on poverty or social stratification that doesn't feel right.



Overall, I thought it was nice- and I like the idea of continuing to partner with local universities in host cities to hold our meetings on campuses. It was nice to have a lot of local students from Dillard who joined our sessions, and I liked the flexibility of the dining hall to come and go and eat as we pleased. For the most part, I thought it was easy to get in and out of campus and we got to park for free. And—we still got to enjoy the perks and benefits of being in a cool and fun city when we were done with our work for the day.

But, speaking honestly, our meetings the past few years have started to raise some questions and concerns for me, and concerns that I think should be seriously considered as an organization. Without a doubt, the pandemic played a role in this, but our decline in membership and participation at the conference is noticeable. I forgot who the conversation was with, but someone mentioned that in the early 2000s, our membership was closer to 400; this figure has now dropped below 100. This drop has been apparent during the conference, as there are simply fewer members to engage with in sessions, in passing, or in the hotel bar. I have also noticed we have fewer graduate students. Obviously this drop is not great for us economically, but it also takes away from our ability to provide resources, networking, and mentorship for our younger scholars—the undergraduates, the graduate students, and even the newer faculty. I have benefitted so much from this organization, and I hope that we will be able to maintain our ability to continue to serve as a safe space for all students and scholars to thrive.

From the Desk of the President

THERESA DAVIDSON

Hello MSSA! I am honored and excited to serve as President of MSSA this year. I am also honored to have served as President-Elect this past year. We had a fantastic conference at Dillard University in New Orleans. It was humbling and gratifying to “return to our roots” by, for the first time in many years, holding the conference at a university. Indeed, the MSSA’s inaugural meeting was held in 1975 in Louisiana at what is now the University of Louisiana at Monroe. I believe the choice of location – an HBCU - helped to reaffirm and exemplify our commitment to diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Moreover, holding the conference on the Dillard campus facilitated student participation, highlighting our dedication to mentoring the next generation of sociologists.



I want to extend a special thanks to our most recent Past President, Meredith Dye, for her hard work to make the conference at Dillard the success that it was. In addition, a particular thanks to Ashraf Esmail, Professor and Director of the Center for Racial Justice at Dillard for suggesting that we hold the conference there and his tireless work to make it happen. Additional gratitude goes out to all the Dillard staff who ensured we had the facilities, equipment, food, transportation, technology, and anything else we needed during our time there. Thanks as well to all the Dillard students and faculty who generously shared their beautiful campus with us for two days. It was an honor and a pleasure.

From the desk of the President, continued

Another important thank you goes out to Marcus Brooks, Chair of the Technology Committee, for ensuring that our virtual post-conference was a success. This was a bit of an experiment, but I think we can all agree that it went off without a hitch. Furthermore, a dedicated virtual only option made space for those who couldn't attend in person due to travel budget constraints or logistical challenges. Additional thanks go out to committee chairs Andrea Hunt (WGS), Kristie Perry (CREM), Matthew West (SCC), Matthew Schneider (Professions), Justin Martin (Membership), and Adam Veitch (Nominations).

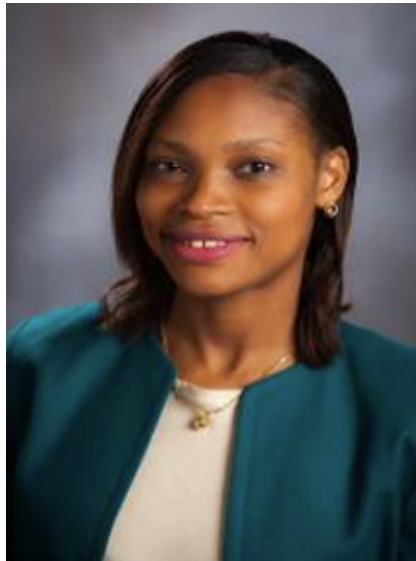
I also want to welcome our new slate of officers. Welcome to Melencia Johnson (President-Elect), Giselle Greenidge (Vice President-Elect), Tina Deshotels (Chair of Membership), Jessica Burke (Nominations Committee Chair), and Jessica McCarty (Chair of Racial and Ethnic Minorities – CREM). I look forward to working with you all as we plan for an exciting conference in Nashville. It is an honor to serve the MSSA as President this year. I believe that when we work together, with a commitment to justice and compassion, there is little we can't accomplish. Indeed, I believe the MSSA embodies those very sentiments. Let's have a great 2024! See you in Nashville!



Congratulations to newly elected officers and committee chairs!



President-Elect:
Melencia Johnson,
University of South
Carolina Aiken



Vice President-Elect:
Giselle Greenidge,
Northwest Missouri
State University



Chair of Membership:
Tina Deshotels,
Jacksonville State
University



Nominations
Committee Chair:
Jessica Burke, Francis
Marion University



Chair of Racial and
Ethnic Minorities:
Jessica McCarty,
University of South
Alabama

Reflecting on 50 years of MSSA, Inc.: A conversation with Dennis McSeveney

Questions from Andrew Tatch

(Q) It was mentioned at the banquet that you attended the very first meetings of the Mid-South Sociological Association. We are now approaching a very notable meeting—our 50th! As you reflect back on your time with our organization, what are some of your favorite memories? Are there any particular meetings that were especially memorable?

(A) The first meeting of MSSA was memorable. As clearly described in Marc Matre's and Kevin Breault's Sociological Spectrum article, "A History of the Mid-South Sociological Association," MSSA met on the campus of the Northeast Louisiana State University (now the University of Louisiana at Monroe). We stayed on campus in dormitories, and I shared a room with my friend and former UNO colleague, the late H. Hugh Floyd from Samford University. I was an assistant professor and (LS)UNO's department chair, Jerry Salomone, strongly urged faculty members he had recently hired to attend this meeting. Many of the early MSSA leaders were from research universities including Mississippi State, Oklahoma State, Louisiana State, and Texas Tech. They decided at that inaugural meeting to address directly issues of racial and gender diversity.



This resulted in MSSA's committees on Minorities and Gender with the chair of each of those committees serving on the Executive Committee. Doing this in 1975, when white males still filled most leadership positions in higher education, was a critical action that helped shape the future of MSSA. These actions provided a foundation for inclusion. That foundation along with the efforts of Willie Pearson and other African American members of MSSA who lead the drive for greater inclusion, especially in the nominations process, which resulted in the election of Willie Pearson, Jr as MSSA President (1986-1987).

Another step toward inclusion was the 1985 addition of a Committee on Small Colleges that, during my term as President (1997-1998), it was renamed the Committee on Small and Community Colleges.

Continued...

50 years of MSSA... continued

Reflections from Dennis McSeveney

Another MSSA memory reflects MSSA collegial atmosphere. It was always a welcoming organization, but its social atmosphere ramped up after 1993 when Martin L. Levin moved from Emory University to become head of the Department of Sociology at Mississippi State University. Marty supported an annual Mississippi State University Cocktail Party at MSSA. This became a huge event, usually in a suite, with an open bar and everyone was welcome.

In the late 1970s, MSSA came close to shutting down. Jerry Salomone, MSSA's 6th President (1980-1981), quietly and without fanfare made a personal loan to keep MSSA running. Through the leadership of Jerry and subsequent presidents, MSSA rebounded.

On a more trivial note, when I became MSSA's Secretary/Treasurer in 1983, the financials and membership rolls were recorded in paper ledger books. I transferred the data to electronic records in Lotus 123 (a precursor of Excel).

Finally, there were periods in MSSA's history when a few faculty advisers brought groups of undergraduates to MSSA meetings. They presented papers and participated in the sessions. The energy and dedication of those early members of MSSA who brought these students lent an energy to the proceedings that benefited all attendees. Organizations like Alpha Kappa Delta offer funding opportunities for students presenting papers at regional sociology meetings as well as funding for faculty advisers who sponsor these papers and attending the meetings with students.

(Q) Over your years with MSSA, how has the organization changed and evolved? What do you see as the organization's most important priority moving forward?

(A) While maintaining its original identity of being welcoming and inclusive, MSSA has changed dramatically. MSSA's original leaders were from departments that offered graduate degrees, many of them from Ph.D. granting departments. During MSSA's first 15 years, 87 percent of presidents were from graduate degree granting programs and 53 percent of those were from Ph.D.-level programs. During the last 15 years, only 1 MSSA president was from a Ph.D. granting program and just two were from graduate-degree granting departments.

50 years of MSSA... continued

Reflections from Dennis McSeveney

I do not “blame” MSSA for this change. Higher education has changed and service to professional organizations has diminished since early in my career and the founding of MSSA. A challenge for MSSA is how to attract more interest and support from graduate degree granting programs in our region, both faculty and graduate students, while retaining the very real sense of community and inclusion.

(Q) What do you see as our main strength? Or what are some things that we do well as an organization?

(A) As I have noted, MSSA’s strength is in diversity and a welcoming atmosphere. MSSA welcomes colleagues from small and community colleges and from research universities; those with extensive external research funding to teachers at colleges designed to serve underrepresented groups; sociologists in non-academic position and endowed chair holders; men and women who received their Ph.D.’s in the 1970s to current undergraduates.

Also, from its inception, MSSA has been a meeting at which scholarly work is presented to colleagues whose comments are supportive and designed to help the presenters focus and strengthen their work. Criticism is constructive, encouraging, and helpful.

Returning to the question about MSSA priorities moving forward, the first challenge is how to attract scholars from research universities while maintaining the environment of inclusion that is at the core of MSSA’s identity.

A second challenge is how to make university administrators -- department chairs, deans, provosts, and presidents -- aware of the importance of organizations of MSSA and similar organizations. I worked on this issue when I served as President of the Association of College Honor Societies and had only limited success.

MSSA, INC. 2023 AWARD WINNERS

AS ANNOUNCED DURING THE 2023 CONFERENCE
BANQUET



Stanford Lyman Distinguished Book Award

- Danielle Antoinette Hidalgo: Dance Music Spaces: Clubs, Clubbers, and DJs Navigating Authenticity, Branding, and Commercialism

Stanford Lyman Memorial Scholarship Dissertation Award

- Jessica Schachle: Teaching in Adversity: How Oklahoma Teachers Navigate Instruction on Race, Gender, and Sexuality

Graduate paper competition

- Faith Myers: A Critical Analysis of Family Leave Policies Across U.S. Universities

Undergraduate paper competition

- Abby Highsmith: How Religiosity and Geography Impact Attitudes on Divorce



INNOVATIVE TEACHING FROM MSSA, INC.

BRETT LEHMAN, AUBURN UNIVERSITY AT MONTGOMERY

Before I recently taught Criminology online I wanted to add an assignment that would boost the sense of a learning community among the students and I, plus encourage students to apply their learning to real-world contexts. The idea hit me at the Planet Fitness in Montgomery, AL when I saw the following sign posted outside the men's locker room.



As a sociologist, the picture struck me as contributing to an individualistic worldview regarding crime prevention. The notion of turning private problems (like being the victim of a crime) into public issues is ignored. Some may say I am reading too much into one picture, though if we extrapolate this worldview to crime prevention in general it means "every person for themselves". When public institutions have no role in crime prevention, the notion that these institutions and their policies could be reformed is erased.

INNOVATIVE TEACHING FROM MSSA, INC, CONTINUED...

BRETT LEHMAN, AUBURN UNIVERSITY AT MONTGOMERY

I presented the picture and these ideas to my students and instructed them to replicate the exercise with a picture of their own. In other words, photograph an authentic image that is communicating or symbolizing something about crime prevention or the fear of crime. Then, students wrote a 1-page paper about the social context where the picture was taken, plus their interpretation of how the picture provides insight into our topics of crime prevention and/or fear of crime. I informed students that once their assignments were complete later in the semester I would make a collage of all pictures to display what all classmates found. While I can't show every picture here, there are a couple that are representative of how the assignment went.



For example, my student who shared the intimidating picture wrote it comes from an apartment community in a predominantly Black neighborhood. This provided important insights into previous lessons on the over-policing of Black communities. For the other picture, a student used their sociological imagination effectively by noticing that a neighborhood watch sign had been posted some time ago, but apparently that was not enough deterrence. A newer sign indicating the “Flock Safety” company was recording the entrance to the neighborhood was added in addition to the older one.

INNOVATIVE TEACHING FROM MSSA, INC, CONTINUED...

BRETT LEHMAN, AUBURN UNIVERSITY AT MONTGOMERY

This, along with similar photos of surveillance strategies shared by other students provided authentic examples of the predominance of surveillance as a crime prevention strategy. The collage shared these kinds of insights with all students and served to reinforce concepts students were exposed to through traditional methods such as reading the text, discussion with classmates, taking quizzes, etc.

As a culmination to the Criminology course that encouraged the development of students' sociological imaginations, students wrote final papers advocating for at least one sociological strategy to proactively reduce crime in their communities. For example, a popular suggestion from our text that students elaborated on involved modifying young boys' socialization to de-emphasize aggression and violence as necessary traits of manhood. With the photography project and resulting collage placed near the end of the semester, students had the opportunity to reflect on numerous course topics before preparing their final papers. In my anecdotal observation, this provided students a better foundation for integrating what they learned across the semester into the final paper. Additionally, linking the course material to experiences in their own communities raised the stakes and motivation by revealing the applicability of the academic exercise to improving conditions in their communities. Beyond standard solutions based on individualism, heavy policing, and surveillance, these students should have a broader view of how to address the complex problem of crime.



FEEDBACK FROM FIRST TIME ATTENDEES

Holland Andrews and Abby Highsmith (Samford University)



The title of my paper was "The Impact of Age and Social Media Use on a Person's Overall Happiness". My paper was about if different generational cohorts used social media differently could that yield different effects on their overall wellbeing. I wanted to specifically see if social media was beneficial to older generations, due to their lack of social relationships as they age, that the connections through social media could be beneficial to them. At the conference I got second place in the Undergraduate paper competition. I was honestly really surprised, but excited. I put a lot of effort into the paper and to see that others thought so too is very encouraging. It was my first time going to the Mid-South Sociological Conference. I really enjoyed my time there. We got to hear about different research that sociologists are currently doing. Abby and I sat in on a deviance discussion that was very interesting. I participated because I wanted to gain experience in presenting at a professional level as well as just see what an option to my future looks like. My professor, Dr. Davidson helped me a lot through this whole process. She intentionally helped me through the process of calculating my data as well as helped me believe I was capable of doing something at this level. I am a third-year sociology major. I am wanting to get my master's in social work or counseling to do marriage and family counseling.

--Holland Andrews

FEEDBACK FROM FIRST TIME ATTENDEES

Holland Andrews and Abby Highsmith (Samford University)



In addition to attending the conference, I had the honor of presenting my research entitled "How Religiosity and Geography Impact Attitudes on Divorce". I presented to other undergraduate students and professors who attended that session. I was also able to be an audience member for many research presentations throughout the conference. It was a very cool opportunity to get to hear what current researchers are doing in the field and be able to learn from them. I also submitted my paper under the same title to the undergraduate research paper competition and won first prize. Attending this year's conference was a unique opportunity to have meaningful conversations with fellow sociologists, meet a lot of people working in the field, and get a glimpse at all of the incredible things this field is doing in the world today.

--Abby Highsmith

CALL FOR BOOK AND JOURNAL CONTRIBUTIONS: SPRINGER



CALL FOR BOOK PROPOSALS:

Springer has published a clinical sociology book series – Clinical Sociology: Research and Practice – for more than 25 years. Clinical sociology covers all areas of sociology. Recent titles in the English-language book series include Community Intervention: Clinical Sociology Perspectives (second edition); The Rights of Unaccompanied Minors: Perspectives and Case Studies on Migrant Children; International Clinical Sociology (second edition); Children’s Human Rights in the USA; Clinical Sociology: Moving from Theory to Practice; The Sociology of Caregiving; Applied and Clinical Sociology in Aotearoa New Zealand; Young People, Violence and Strategic Interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa; and Moving Toward a Just Peace: The Mediation Continuum. Books currently in development cover a wide range of topics including mining; ethics; and prison gardens.

If you would like to edit or author a book in this series, please contact the series editor: Jan Marie Fritz (jan.fritz@uc.edu). Information about the book series is available on the Springer website at <https://www.springer.com/series/5805>. The link for the book proposal form is available on the Springer website and also can be found directly at https://media.springer.com/full/springer-instructions-for-authors-assets/pdf/SN_BPF_EN.pdf.

CALL FOR JOURNAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The University of Johannesburg Press publishes the Clinical Sociology Review, an open-access journal with articles available in three languages – English, Spanish and French. There are no submission or publication fees. The Clinical Sociology Review was first published in 1982 and all those issues are available through the Wayne State University Press website at <https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/csr/>.

Contributions are welcome to the journal’s three sections: The History of Clinical Sociology, Articles, and Resources. The History section contains articles about the history of the field as well as introductory pieces to historic publications by clinical sociologists. The Articles section contains short and long submissions such as research articles; essays; discussions of teaching or training; and discussions of intervention work. The Resources section contains articles of interest to clinical sociologists. These could be critical reviews of one or more films or books; training exercises; as well as pieces about clinical sociology membership organizations or services (such as program accreditation or individual certification as a clinical sociologist).

For detailed information, about submission requirements, please use the following link: <https://journals.uj.ac.za/index.php/csr/about/submissions>. Please use the following link for submission: <https://journals.uj.ac.za/index.php/csr/about/submissions>.

If you have questions about a submission, please contact one of the Editors of the journal: (Prof. Tina Uys at tuys@uj.ac.za or Prof. Jan Marie Fritz at jan.fritz@uc.edu) or the Associate Editor (Jacques Rheaume at rheaume.jacques@uqam.ca).

Mid-South Sociological Association wins

Roger Guy landed three publications this year!

- **Roger Guy** and Piotr A. Chomczyński (2023) "Urban Marginality, Neighborhood Dynamics, and the Illicit Drug Trade in Mexico City." Qualitative Sociology. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-023-09546-6>
 - Piotr A. Chomczyński and **Roger Guy** (2023) "Beyond Money, Power, and Masculinity: Toward an Analytical Perspective on Recruitment to Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations," International Sociology <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/02685809231168579>
 - **Roger Guy** and Piotr A. Chomczyński (2023) "Police Violence, Corrupt Cops, and the Repudiation of Stigma Among Underclass Residents in Mexico City," Current Sociology. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00113921231166148>
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Hollie Teague, working alongside the University of Maine in Fort Kent, implemented an early college Intro to Sociology course in Nokomis Regional High School in Newport, Maine. This is the first college-level Sociology course in the school's history!

Giselle Greenidge, Assistant Professor at Northwest Missouri State University, got a publication!

- Strong, M. T., **Greenidge, G. C. M.**, & Chaplin, K. S. (2023). Afrofuturism as an Instructional Method. In J. Chin & M. Kozimor (Eds.), Emerging Stronger: Pedagogical Lessons from the Pandemic (pp. 138-151). Routledge

MSSA, Inc wins, continued...

Soheil Sabriseilabi and Andrew Tatch from Troy University have a forthcoming publication!

- Sabriseilabi, Soheil, Mahmoud Sadri, and Andrew Tatch. (Forthcoming). "Religion's Manifold Relationship with Attitudes toward Abortion." Journal of Contemporary Religion.
-

Andrea Hunt was a 2022 finalist for the Shoals Woman of the Year!



It's the most wonderful time of the year!

We have mostly survived another semester! I hope that as you wrap this Fall, you are able to take some time and reflect on your accomplishments and your efforts this past year. Our field is undoubtedly a tough one that is not always valued as highly as I think it should be, but I do take pride in knowing that our collective individual efforts do make a difference in the lives of the students we empower. Happy holidays, friends!

Andrew

