



The Alabama-Mississippi Sociological Association  
Annual Meeting | February 25, 2022  
10:00am-4:00pm  
Virtual Conference

# EXPLORING CRISIS AND CONFLICT

FROM A SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE



MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE  
UNIVERSITY®

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**The Alabama-Mississippi Sociological Association**  
**2022 Annual Meeting | February 25, 2022**  
**Virtual Conference**  
**EXPLORING CRISIS and CONFLICT**  
**from a Social Science Perspective**

**FINAL PROGRAM**  
**A-MSA President, Dr. Sherill Morris-Francis**

**AGENDA AT A GLANCE**

ACTIVITY	TIME	LOCATION
Opening Session	10:00 am – 10:30 am	General Zoom
<b>Session 1 – Concurrent Paper Sessions</b> <b>10:30 am - 11:30 am</b>		
Session 1: A – Chair – Ms. Alana Williams		Zoom Room 1
Session 1: B – Chair – Dr. Ram Alagan		Zoom Room 2
<b>SESSION II – ROUNDTABLE – CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b> <b>11:35 AM – 12:15 PM</b>		
Session IIA – Moderator – Dr. Brenda I Gill		Zoom Room 1
Session II B – Moderator – Dr. Sherill Morris-Francis		Zoom Room 2
<b>SESSION III – PAPER SESSION</b>		
Chair – Dr. Rochelle Cobbs	<b>12:30 PM – 1:30 PM</b>	General Zoom
<b>SESSION IV: CONCURRENT PANEL DISCUSSION</b> <b>1:35 PM – 2:30 PM</b>		
Panel 1 – Chair – Dr. Seela Aladuwaka		Zoom Room 1
Panel 2 – Chair - Dr. Jolene Vincent		Zoom Room 2
<b>GENERAL SESSION</b> <b>2:35 PM - 3:45 PM</b>		
<b>Presiding: Dr. Sherill Morris-Francis, A-MSA President</b>		
<b>Guest Speaker</b> <b>Business Meeting</b>		

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**Friday, February 25, 2022**  
**10:00 AM – 4:00 PM**

**Opening Session – 10:00 am – 10:30 am**

**Opening Remarks –**

Dr. Sherill Morris-Francis, A-MSA President  
Mississippi Valley State University

**Welcome –**

Dr. Abigail Newsome – Associate Vice-President of Academic Affairs, Mississippi Valley State University

**Session I – 10:30 – 11:30 am – Paper Session - CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

**Session 1: A - Chair: Ms. Alana Williams, Alabama State University**

**Participants:**

**An Examination of Enrollment and Retention Rates at a Southern HBCU – Taylor Young, Alabama State University**

Using a qualitative design, this study investigates some of the reasons why students quit college before graduating. To determine some of the reasons, the researchers conducted virtual face-to-face interviews with 24 participants. The data were then coded using open, axial, and sequential coding to derive themes. The main purpose of this study was to learn first-hand from students who had dropped out some of the reasons why they did not remain enrolled. This research sought to suggest some retention measures that universities can implement or revise. By understanding and researching the problems that may arise, it is beneficial to provide strategies to southern HBCUs to gain better enrollment and retention rates. Once the universities can understand and analyze why students are not remaining, they can implement programs and strategies that can help retain the student. Some of the reasons for leaving included receiving poor or no help from the financial aid office; some were forced out because of inability to pay tuition, lack of knowledge and tools to help successfully navigate the university process. This study may be used to help design a larger project that can garner more feedback from a larger population of students.

**How the Travelling Experience Gave Me the Global Perspective of the Identity of African Americans – Carmel Sanders. Alabama State University**

This presentation will discuss a female HBCU student's global perspective. This is an imperative conversation due to the lack of involvement HBCUs have with the global world. Traveling abroad becomes a metamorphic experience once it is done through the eyes and ears of an African American. From first-hand experience, the number of revelations reached while embarking on an international journey not only changes one's mindset but contributes to one's personality as a whole. It is apparent that the same pressures present for African Americans in the United States, along with the lack of international awareness, fell heavily on the inadequacy of government funding and required education. To a greater extent, foreign citizens are simply unexposed to African Americans despite the substantial cultural influence that has been provided by the ethnic group. For an African American, the traveling experience is altered from sightseeing to being a sight to see. It is imperative that young African American adults are provided with the opportunity to develop a global perspective. This cannot be done without personal experience, which requires proper funding. This presentation provides empirical experience examining the bewilderment held by citizens of many different nations. Preeminently, it will encourage my institution, along with fellow HBCUs, to advocate global citizenship. It will also urge the government to administer equitable funding so that minority ethnic groups can receive the same opportunities provided to non-minorities.

**Social Media as the Third Eye of the Church - Dr. Carolyn L. Gordon, Associate Professor of Mass Communication, Mississippi Valley State University.**

From the creation of the moveable type of Gutenberg Press to the first radio broadcast, religion in general and Christianity, in particular, have always been at the forefront of communication technology developments. Since the development and adoption of social media usage, the church has struggled with its role, use, and place in the worship experience. With the onset of the pandemic, social media is now a mainstay within the church and other religious communities, but in the process of its adoption, other social media phenomena are emerging. One emerging phenomenon impacting the church is the concept of social media serving as the "third eye." From Evangelist Paula White calling down African angels to Pastor Michael Todd rubbing spit on a man's face during the pandemic, it was social media and not the church membership that called them out and held them accountable. This study explores the concept of social media as a third eye and its impact on the church both directly and indirectly.

**Session 1: B - Chair: Dr. Ram Alagan Professor of Geography, Alabama State University Participants:**

**Mapping the Relationship between COVID-19 and Cancer Epidemiology in Alabama – Hanan Musa, Kayla Edwards, Ram Alagan, and Manoj Mishra**

Geographic Information System has been employed to map the current health crisis of the Covid-19 virus and related other health problems. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has become one of the unprecedented global health crises affecting everyone across the planet. Alabama is one of the least vaccinated states in the U.S. due to various political, cultural, historical, and vaccine hesitance. This situation is particularly evident among African American population in Alabama's Black Belt. Data also show the cancer epidemic is relatively high among African American population in Alabama (Alabama Department of Public Health, 2021). We hypothesized that the lack of health care facilities, lack of proper health education, historic poor socioeconomic conditions, and high cancer prevalence had increased the Covid-19 cases and deaths among African American population compared to the white population in Alabama. Using GIS, this research explores the spatial relationship between Covid-19 and cancer risk. This research also underlines the associations between Covid-19, cancer, and the systematic health disparity in African American population in Alabama's Black Belt region. Using U.S. Census data, CDC, Alabama Department of Public Health, and State Cancer Registry data in GIS, we explore the cancer epidemic at the county level in Alabama. The GIS examination displayed that African American population in Alabama has significantly higher cancer mortality than the white population. GIS findings also underline apparent health and socioeconomic disparity in cancer, and Covid-19 incidence and mortality are high among African American population in the Black Belt.

**Exploring Socioeconomic Impact in Breast Cancer Epidemiology in Alabama: Geospatial Analysis – Asia Turner, Corrigan Murry, Ram Alagan, and Manoj Mishra**

Breast Cancer is one of the top health epidemics in the United States. Poor socioeconomic factors are one of the critical factors for breast cancer prevalence. In 2019, an estimated 268,600 breast cancer cases were diagnosed among women, and approximately 41,760 women are expected to die from breast cancer (1). In Alabama, in 2019, an estimated 4240 cases of female breast cancer and approximately 690 females are expected to die (2). Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer mortality among all cancer types affecting females in the USA (3). Although multiple characteristics are associated with this epidemic, socioeconomic and environmental factors will be presented. We hypothesized a relationship between socioeconomic conditions such as poverty, education, dietary, health insurance, and environmental exposures closely related to breast cancer among the African American community.

The GIS analysis demonstrated that African American females in Alabama have a significantly higher breast cancer mortality than white females, with 29.2 versus 20.1. This further supports the notion that there exists a health disparity in breast cancer incidences in Alabama. The GIS analysis also suggests an apparent health disparity in breast cancer incidence and mortality in Alabama.

**Serving Motherhood: Gendered Food and Restaurant Work in the Context of COVID-19,  
Kaitlyn P. Hall, Mississippi State University**

This study investigates the challenges mothers working in restaurants faced at work and home due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Participants from Mississippi and Arkansas were interviewed via Zoom to discuss their experiences with paid and unpaid work done in both sectors of life. Most participants were servers and cooks in dine-in restaurants that were forced to shut down due to COVID-19. Findings suggest that these mothers experienced many challenges in their workplace and home. At work, they dealt with hours being cut, difficulty with customers, changes in discount policies, and enforcing a mask mandate. At home, they were eating in and cooking more meals than before and were expected to feed more people. The women in this study were doing gender by performing the expected feminine roles and tasks, despite marital status, during the pandemic because they were the ones who were home most. This contributes to the existing literature because it shows that with the added stress from the consequences of COVID-19, mothers are still performing paid and unpaid labor in similar ways as before the pandemic. This study calls for further research on how the pandemic has caused additional challenges and changes in working mothers' lives in the restaurant industry. This study is important work because it investigates the experiences of working mothers who were among the most affected by the pandemic.

**The Video Game Industry and The Opioid Crisis: Compare and Contrast China's Historical Fear of Western-Caused Addiction – Sandharu K. Aladuwaka**

The Opium War was fought between China and Great Britain from 1839 to 1942, and it was one of the important political and social crises China dealt with. Due to the Opium addiction, China faced much tougher political consequences and had to compensate Great Britain for its losses, give Hong Kong Island to the British, and increase the number of treaty ports where the British could trade and reside. China could face another western capitalist Information Technology and video gaming addiction within China and create a major wave of political, social, and mental health crisis in the Chinese population. This research analyzes the Chinese government's dichotomy with its tech sector and capitalist privatization. The 'artifact' of the analysis is China's mandate on Video Games in September 2021 when they banned children from playing video games for more than 3 hours per weekend, masked as a concern of mental health. The 'model' or Communication Journal used to analyze the artifact uncovers how China's Communist Party's true intent of this action may lie in trying to protect their communist economic model from a capitalist takeover. Utilizing the model, the research mirrors addiction with video games with China's historical fear of Western caused addiction via the Opioid Crisis in the 19th century.

**Session II: 11:35 – 12:15 pm – Round Table – CONCURRENT Sessions**

**Session II: A - Moderator: Dr. Brenda I. Gill, Professor of Sociology, Alabama State University**

**Conflicts Because of the Crises: Navigating through COVID-19 as a Full-Time Student – Charles Lewis and Taylor Young, Alabama State University**

Experiences with COVID-19 have led to several crises. Arising from these crises were several instances of conflict. This round-table discussion aims to allow the students to discuss the conflicts caused by the COVID-19 crises. Comprised of one graduate student and one undergraduate student, the two students, will describe their crises situations that composed a conflict for them. They will share real-life experiences and address the struggles of being full-time students navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. By sharing these experiences, it is intended that faculty, staff, and other administrators will have a chance to learn about the conflicts these students endured during the pandemic.

**Session II: B - Moderator: Dr. Sherill Morris-Francis – Associate Professor of Criminal Justice, Mississippi Valley State University**

**An Analysis of U.S. Murder Rate in the Covid-19 Era – Dr. Oko Elechi and Dr. Rochelle Cobbs, Department of Criminal Justice, Mississippi Valley State University.**

In 2020 the murder rate increased by about 30% in the United States. This was the highest increase in the murder rate in the country in over twenty years. In a significant departure from the past, where the murder rate was concentrated in the big urban cities, the murder rate was spread across the nation, including small towns and rural areas. It is difficult to identify one root cause of the high murder rate in the country in 2020. However, some noticeable problems associated with the Covid19 include strained familial relationships, stress, high unemployment rate, and increased economic hardship may have exacerbated the economic situation and driven people to violence. Again, the political environment and paranoia resulting from that also partly explain the unprecedented increase in the purchase of firearms in the country. This study examines all these issues and more, which may explain why the murder rate increased so much in 2020 at the peak of the Covid19 pandemic.

**Session III: 12:30– 1:30 pm – Paper Session**

**Chair: Dr. Rochelle Cobbs, Associate Professor of Criminal Justice, Mississippi Valley State University**

**Participants:**

**Depression and Prisoners – Ryan Howard, Troy University**

Depression, a notorious mental illness, does not discriminate against its victims. Particularly within the prison system, depression and other mental health issues remain a rampant problem for prisoners and their families. Regarding age, the facility environment can play a vital role in the mental health of juvenile inmates, as observed in the study of juveniles in adult prisons. Additionally, adult inmates in the proper placement are observed to have significant levels of depression, highlighting the common factor of incarceration as a cause of depression. Imprisonment is also observed to have detrimental effects on the family dynamics of currently or formerly incarcerated individuals, particularly in parent-child relationships. A synthesis of existing scientific work regarding depression and prisoners reveals significant findings and correlations across age, gender, and family relationships.

**Examining the Intersectionality of Implicit and Explicit Biases in Law Enforcement, but more importantly, countering such harmful actions – Alana N. Williams.**

Regardless of whether a bias is implicit or explicit, it is still a bias, but really, are they the same? During this presentation, A 12-year veteran of policing who specializes in community relations and increasing safety and professionalism amongst law enforcement personnel will pose the above questions. The presentation will identify the following: the difference between implicit bias and explicit bias, the direct effect these biases have on law enforcement officers when interacting with community members, the countermeasures to minimize implicit and explicit biases, and identity what law enforcement administrative responses are to such biases within their rank.

**COVID-19 Deaths among Law Enforcement Officials, Dr. Makeela J. Wells, Auburn University, and Dr. Jamie L. Boydston, Louisiana Tech University**

In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that COVID-19 infections had reached pandemic levels, resulting in quarantining periods throughout the United States to slow its spread. However, essential workers, including law enforcement officials, were required to report to work, making them more susceptible to contracting and spreading COVID-19. Throughout the pandemic, there have been several reports of COVID-19 outbreaks at police stations, sheriff's offices, and correctional facilities. The goal of the exploratory study was to investigate the characteristics of

law enforcement officials in the United States and surrounding territories who died from COVID-19 in 2020-2021. Data were drawn from the Officer Down Memorial Page's (ODMP) website. Results revealed that 560 law enforcement officials have died from COVID-19. More specifically, the majority of COVID-19 deaths among law enforcement officers occurred in the southern region of the United States, and White officers were more likely than officers of color to die from COVID-19. Analyses also revealed that the average number of days between COVID-19 contraction and death was about 26 days. Policy implications, limitations, and directions for future research will be discussed.

### **The Trouble with TROI – Social Theory Pre-study, Jenna Abbott**

This paper discusses how Star Trek: The Next Generation's depiction of Counselor Deanna Troi embodies the Postfeminist attitudes found in popular media of the early 1990s, particularly as an exploration of stories centered around "women's issues." Additionally, I will draw conclusions about how we can use those depictions to understand better the need for a variety of female stories on television

### **Session IV: Panel - 1:35 pm – 2:30 pm – CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

#### **Panel #1 - Chair: Dr. Seela Aladuwaka, Associate Professor of Geography, Alabama State University**

##### **Gender-based Violence and the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic:**

- Brenda I. Gill: Two Pandemics in the LAC Region: Covid 19 and Gender-Based Violence.
- Fagdeba Bakoyema: COVID -19 and Gender Based Violence in Africa.
- Cheryl Lang: Impact of COVID-19 on Gender-Based Violence and Community-Based Organizations in the U.S.
- Seela Aladuwaka and Ram Alagan: Gender Based Violence and COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia

Violence against women is a widespread problem globally, posing significant setbacks in health, education, human rights, and economic development. No matter who you are or where you live, you will know a victim of gender-based violence (GBV). GBV has been worsened globally by The COVID19 pandemic (U.N. Women, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2020). Increased domestic violence cases were reported from developed and developing countries and occurred in various geographic scales, including homes and workplaces (among migrants and domestic workers. U.N. Special Rapporteur Dubravka Simonovic warned that COVID-19 exacerbated GBV due to isolation during the lockdown, increased domestic work to care for children, elderly relatives, and sick family members, limited movements with financial constraints, less community support and help services. It is noted that the pandemic has intensified risk factors for gender-based violence due to several mitigating factors (APA, 2020). Mounting evidence from all over the globe highlights the severity of this issue which demands urgent attention. This panel seeks to increase awareness by examining violence against women during COVID-19 from a regional and global level. The presenters will highlight the enormous challenges women and societies encounter, analyze their underlying causes, and propose mitigation measures. They will examine the Latin American and Caribbean, American, Asian, and African regions to reveal the state of GBV during the pandemic.

#### **Panel #2: Discussants: Dr. Jolene Vincent, Assistant Professor, Troy University and Ryan Howard, Troy University**

##### **Examining the Internet's Influence in Social Interactions and Events.**

The use of social media has increased dramatically in recent years, with many individuals having several profiles/accounts on various online platforms. With the expansion and ease of access to the Internet, "deviant cybercommunities" have been recently discussed in scholarly literature regarding the impact they can have on developing and cultivating extremist ideas. These online virtual spaces

allow users to interact with others who share and promote similar sentiments, thus normalizing extremist views and, in some cases, potentially engaging in real-life deviant acts. These online spaces and the impacts they have demonstrated to have on real-life events, from protests to the January 6 U.S. Capitol Attack, have led to increased scrutiny and calls to reform such online spaces. The impact of social media and the Internet has undoubtedly shaped and created a unique aspect of our social world and how people interact.

**2:35 pm – 3:45 pm GENERAL SESSION**

**Presiding:** Dr. Sherill Morris-Francis, President, Alabama Mississippi Sociological Association

**Introduction of Speaker: Dr. Sade Turnipseed, Assistant Professor of History, Jackson State University.**

**Speaker:** Dr. Thomas M. Kersen, Associate Professor of Sociology, Jackson State University

**Topic:** *“Sociologists as Molders of Consensus”*

**Business Meeting:**

**Closing Remarks:**