

GSS/SSS April 2015 NEWSLETTER
Government Statistics and Social Statistics Sections
American Statistical Association

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**UPCOMING DEADLINES AND EVENTS:**

**May 1**                      Vote for the ASA 2015 officers until 11:59 pm **DEADLINE**

**August 8-13**              2015 Joint Statistical Meetings—Seattle, WA

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GSS DATA CHALLENGE 2015 **NEW!**
Submitted by Wendy Martinez (2015 Government Statistics Section Chair)

As you know, the Government Statistics Section is sponsoring a Data Challenge in 2015. The contest was open to anyone, including college students and professionals from the private or public sector. Participants were challenged to analyze a public data set using any statistical and/or visualization tools and methods. The dataset for the GSS Data Challenge 2015 is the US Census Bureau's tract and block Planning Databases.

We are proud to announce that there are eight contestants in the Data Challenge 2015. They will be presenting their work in two sessions at the JSM 2015 in Seattle. Four will be giving oral presentations in a topic-contributed session. Another four will be giving poster presentations as part of the GSS speed poster session.

The speed poster session will take place on **Wednesday, 8/12/2015, 8:30 AM - 10:20 AM** and will have the following presentations:

- **Who are the Non-Voters?** — Bingchen Liu and Lynne Stokes
- **Census Tract-Level Disparities: Examining Food Swamps and Food Deserts** — Lucy D'Agostino McGowan and Alice Toll
- **Exploring the Modifiable Areal Unit Problem** — Talha Ali and Owais Gilani
- **Determinants of Poverty in US** — Guillermo Basulto-Elias and Natalia A Da Silva

The topic-contributed session is scheduled for **Wednesday, 8/12/2015, 2:00 PM - 3:50 PM** and includes the following presenters:

- **Tailoring Outreach to Boost Mail Self-Response in Geographic Areas with Similar Low Response Rates** – Darryl Creel
- **Exploring the Census Bureau's 2014 Planning Database Using Topological Data Analysis** – Robert Baskin
- **Informing Natural Disaster Response with Census Data** – Jonathan Auerbach and Christopher Eshleman
- **Optimizing Survey Cost-Error Tradeoffs: A Multiple Imputation Strategy Using the Census Planning Database** – Shin-Jung Lee

We hope you will support the Data Challenge 2015 by coming to listen to these interesting sessions.

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**THE BEST “TOP 5” LIST YOU WILL SEE IN THIS NEWSLETTER**

**NEW!**

*Submitted by Jill Montaquila (Past-GSS Chair)*

As Past-Chair of the GSS, one of my charges is to prepare the section's election slate for the next election. There is still plenty of time for this (and you will see other calls for nominees in future newsletters), but I would like to start gathering nominations. The terms begin in January 2017 (yes, that's 2017!), and the positions that will be up for a vote are: Chair-Elect, Program Chair-Elect, Secretary/Treasurer, and Publications Officer.

The following is my list of The Top 5 Reasons to Consider Candidacy on the GSS Executive Committee. As a member of the Executive Committee:

5. You will have a say in how the section is run. (Well, all section members have a voice, but you will be more directly involved in the regular operations and decision-making processes.)
4. You will get “insider information” about things like upcoming conferences, petitions for new ASA sections, and other happenings within the ASA.
3. You will have opportunities to hone your leadership and collaboration skills.
2. You will have the opportunity to meet and interact with a lot of great people!
1. You will know that you are playing an important part in supporting the Federal statistical community!

If you are interested in running for any of these positions, or know of someone else who is (or might be), please send me your nomination. And if you have any questions about these positions, feel free to contact me at [jillmontaquila@westat.com](mailto:jillmontaquila@westat.com).

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2015 JOINT STATISTICAL MEETINGS: INVITED AND TOPIC CONTRIBUTED SESSIONS

Submitted by Jenny Guarino (GSS Program Chair) and Barbara Downs (SSS Program Chair)

The Social and Government Statistics sections (SSS and GSS) have organized a great set of technical sessions and luncheon roundtables for the upcoming Joint Statistical Meetings. The 6 invited sessions and 13 topic-contributed sessions listed below cover a broad set of topics that we think you will find to be of great interest. We also organized regular contributed papers into 12 additional sessions. In addition to these papers and panels, we encourage you to visit the poster sessions and GSS Speed Session. Posters provide a great opportunity for you to interact with the authors to discuss their research. This year, the Speed Session will be held on Wednesday August 12th at 8:30am and includes presentations for the GSS Data Challenge. More information on these sessions can be found at: <http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2015/onlineprogram/index.cfm>

INVITED SESSIONS

- Bayesian Approaches to Record Linkage
- Utilizing Administrative Records and Adaptive Design in the 2020 Census
- Poverty, Government Program Receipt, and Measurement Using Administrative and Survey Data
- Better Demographic Forecasts, Better Policy Decisions
- Causal Inference Meets Big Data
- Structural Equation Modeling and Analysis in Testing and Estimating Causal Relationships for Social Science Data

TOPIC CONTRIBUTED SESSIONS

- The Census Bureau's Quest to Make Better Research-driven Decisions for Economic Surveys
- Crowd-sourcing Big Data from Smartphone Apps for Transportation Research: Role of Statistics and Challenges
- Small Area Estimation: New Methods and Applications to Epidemiology
- Protecting Privacy While Maximizing the Utility of Government Data: Evaluating Current Approaches and Exploring New Alternatives
- 2015 Student Paper Award (GSS/SSS/SRMS)
- GSS Data Challenge 2015
- Data Presentation Standards within the Federal Statistical System
- Leadership and Women in Statistics
- Cross-Cultural Survey Design and Implementation
- Linking Survey Data to Administrative Records: Issues in Consent, Bias, and Efficiency
- Health Insurance and Medicare

- Recent Issues in Applying Causal Inference Methods to Health Disparities: Making Informed Decisions on Interventions
- Quality Assurance of Agile Survey Methodology in Informing Better Decisions in Humanitarian Emergencies

CONTRIBUTED SESSIONS

- Statistical Inference
- Innovative Approaches to Record Linkage
- Working with Missing Data: Nonresponse, Imputation and Suppressed Data
- Statistical Quality and Estimation Validation: Measuring the Benefits
- Disclosure Avoidance, Data Privacy and Perturbed Data: Protecting Sensitive Data
- Sampling Design and Pre-Survey Benefits
- Clinical Trials and Survey Design
- Demography and Education
- Survey Design
- Society and Networks
- Methodology: Model Fit
- Methodology: Evaluation Approaches

GSS and SSS have also organized several roundtables. We expect these topics to be highly informative and of interest to a wide variety of the membership; space is limited so please sign up promptly.

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**WRAY JACKSON SMITH 2015 SCHOLARSHIP AWARD WINNER**

**NEW!**

*Submitted by Jenny Guarino (Wray Jackson Smith Award Selection Committee)*

Jonathan Auerbach, a doctoral student in the Statistics Department at Columbia University, is the winner of the 2015 Wray Jackson Smith Scholarship.

Jonathan graduated with a bachelor's degree in economics from Cornell University, and is currently a first year Ph.D. student in statistics at Columbia University. Jonathan's interests lie in the intersection of policy and statistics. Prior to starting his PhD program, he worked as a research associate at the CUNY Center for Urban Research and, prior to that, as an analyst for the New York City Council. Jonathan has participated in a variety of research projects with New York City agencies, with a focus on program evaluation. Currently he is working with the Department of Parks and Recreation to assess their response to natural disasters and with the Departments of Small Business Services and Design and Construction on identifying the impact of the MWBE program.

Jonathan is also interested in open data and government transparency. He has presented before the City Council at a 2013 hearing on the NYC Open Data Plan, and has written for publications such as Amstat News on the political challenges. Jonathan also demonstrated the value of open data by estimating the number of rats in New York City, which won the 2014 YSS/Significance Young Statistician's Writing Competition.

Jonathan plans to use the Wray Jackson Smith Scholarship to subsidize travel expenses to JSM this year and next year where he will present recent work with Parks and Recreation.

Members of the 2015 Wray Jackson Smith Scholarship Committee are: Jennifer Park (Chair), Joseph Salvo, and Jenny Guarino. Join us in congratulating Jonathan on his accomplishment.

## GOVERNMENT STATISTICS SECTION

*The mission of the Government Statistics Section (GSS) is to promote the use of sound statistical theory and methods in the production of data at all levels of government--be it Federal, State, local, or international; assist in the broad dissemination of those data; and encourage good statistical practice by all users. Areas of interest for the Section include all that involve the production, dissemination, and application of governmental statistics, including concern with statistical policy issues, quality and usefulness of governmental data products, special problems of State and local data, comparability of data among different countries, and the role of professional statisticians in the public sector.*

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## SOCIAL STATISTICS SECTION

*The Social Statistics Section seeks to advance research in social statistics, both in areas which involve the use of methods of statistical inquiry, and in those which involve the use of statistical data and the development of statistical measurement. This section will also plan for active participation in the affairs of the American Statistical Association by those interested in these matters and for representation of activities in this major field in the program of the ASA.*

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