INCITE Mission

By leveraging the ideas and empirical tools of the social and human sciences, INCITE conceives and conducts collaborative research, projects, and programs that generate knowledge, promote just, equitable societies, and enrich our intellectual environment.

INCITE History

INCITE | Interdisciplinary Center for Innovative Theory & Empirics descends from the Bureau for Applied Social Research, established at Columbia University in 1941 by Paul F. Lazarsfeld. INCITE was launched in 2012 to incorporate University-wide interdisciplinary initiatives and activities previously housed at the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy (ISERP) and the Paul F. Lazarsfeld Center for Social Sciences.

Home to diverse programs and research projects, including the Columbia Center for Oral History Research and the Oral History Master of Arts, INCITE uniquely brings together the social sciences and the humanities to produce knowledge that mutually enriches these fields.
By generating wide-ranging internal and external financial support, INCITE has built a powerful model for interdisciplinary research and training.

We achieve our mission through ambitious, innovative initiatives that respond to questions vital to society and academic fields. Such issues include, among others, the value of a liberal arts education with respect to participatory democracy, the structure of community organizing, the transition to democracy in post-Arab Spring Tunisia, and understanding the neural bases of social behavior.

We have built a dedicated administrative infrastructure for pre- and post-award activity, facilitating large-scale projects that can be launched quickly while keeping fundraising and administrative costs low despite no endowment support. 94% of INCITE revenue is spent directly on programs and research.
INCITE Staff

Directed by Cole Professor of Social Sciences Peter Bearman, INCITE’s diverse research, educational, and administrative staff hold appointments at Columbia University and contribute to the intellectual community that defines Columbia. The foci of our research and programs range widely, using ideas and methods from multiple disciplines. Staff and affiliates hold degrees in sociology, political science, anthropology, management, demography, psychology, history, journalism, economics, and complex systems.

*Image from Corpus project - See Page 6*
INCITE’s evolving set of interdisciplinary research projects contributes crucially to knowledge. Many are funded through grants. Some are internally supported. We invest in high risk/high return projects that we believe have great potential for changing conversations in society and the academy.

National Research Agenda — Pages 5-9

International Research Agenda — Pages 10-11

Active projects through December 2017

** Denotes active projects requiring further financial support. Contact Michael Falco at mf2727@columbia.edu to learn more.
Laurence Getford describes a work of art by Robert Rauschenberg during a technical interview, one of the many innovations on the Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project. See Page 23.

Columbia Center for Oral History Research

Joined INCITE in January 2014
Various Funders**

This INCITE initiative conceives an expansive agenda of recording unique life histories, documenting central historical events and memories of our time, providing public programming, and teaching and conducting research across fields. Recent projects include the Robert Rauschenberg Oral History, the Phoenix House Oral History, The Harriman Institute Oral History, the Atlantic Philanthropies Oral History, and a recently launched project with LGBTQ+ alumni of Columbia University.

www.ccohr.incite.columbia.edu
Corpus Collection and Exploration
July 2015 - Ongoing
**INCITE Funded**

INCITE pioneers emergent methods of multi-source textual analysis. Having used such methods to produce work that examines texts ranging from every U.S. State of the Union address to all the books of the Bible, we are now developing and deploying new natural language processing tools capable of linking the morphological features of texts to semantic networks.

Computational Social Science
December 2016 - Ongoing
**Social Science Research Council**

Five interlinked computational social science projects document the effects of post-bellum (U.S. Civil War) events and institutions on enduring racial inequality in the United States. A key innovation of this initiative is measuring intergenerational effects to reveal mechanisms that reproduce inequality.
Facing Whiteness

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 77% of Americans identify as “white.” What whiteness means, however, is infrequently discussed or thought about. Interviewing white Americans about what whiteness means for them, this project collaborates with filmmaker Whitney Dow to develop a new way to link the social sciences and the humanities and stimulate discussion about what it means to be white in America today. The first research site is in Southwest Michigan.

Domestic Health Index

December 2016 - January 2018
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

This project develops ways to create a Domestic Health Index (DHI) using data from high frequency wearable technology like FitBit and the iPhone to low resolution population-level characteristics of communities that shape health. This allows the DHI to incorporate real-time data (heart rate, sleep, steps, and the like) to track health disparity in the U.S., much as the Dow Jones Index tracks economic well-being.
**Neural Foundations of Social Groups**

September 2016 - Ongoing  
**Presidential Scholars in Society & Neuroscience & INCITE**

This research integrates the conceptual and methodological frameworks of social network analysis and cognitive social neuroscience using fMRI technology. We seek to better understand fundamental human processes implicated in creating social solidarity: how group identity emerges and consensus is formed, the emergence of affective reciprocity in groups, and the neural signatures of identity.

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**Risk of Autism and Assisted Reproductive Technologies**

July 2014 - Ongoing  
**National Institutes of Health**

This project builds off our previous Understanding Autism Project (see Page 23) to see how new trends in reproductive technology interact with the patterns of autism occurrence. This project contributes to public health by building and analyzing a unique population-level dataset designed to assess the association between Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) or its subtypes and autism as well as identify the mechanisms of the association. This will better enable individuals and their health care providers to weigh the risks and benefits of ART procedures and to identify potential modifiable risk factors for autism.
Organizing for New York

January 2015 - Ongoing
INCITE**

Using a respondent-driven sampling design, this project looks to understand the most effective social justice organizing practices and how these practices differ across different networks of organizers. Over time, this study will expand to support and intervene on behalf of organizations we identify as having great potential for achieving their ends but insufficient resources for doing so. Notably, this is the first comprehensive study of organizers across social justice struggles in New York City.

The network of community organizers in New York City compiled by INCITE researchers. To date, we have identified 500-plus organizers in the city and generated the network of connections across issue areas.
REALM
October 2015 - August 2019
New York University-Abu Dhabi

Research & Empirical Analysis of Labor Migration (REALM) sheds light on the processes that sustain unfair migrant labor. It accomplishes this by empirically specifying the structures and dynamics of how temporary workers in the Gulf region are recruited for jobs not in their home countries. INCITE supports the administrative and data core of this project, overseeing researchers in Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Philippines and the United Arab Emirates.

The Atlantic Philanthropies Oral History Project
January 2014 - July 2021
The Atlantic Philanthropies

This project analyzes the effectiveness of the Atlantic Philanthropies’ limited-life grantmaking in its program fields (Aging, Children & Youth, Population Health, Reconciliation and Human Rights) and in its countries of focus (United States, Bermuda, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, Viet Nam, Australia). When the project is complete we will have captured more than 1,200 hours of audio.

Responding to the Syrian Refugee Crisis
April 2017 - Ongoing
INCITE**

INCITE is funding and providing design support for research carried out by ASPIRE, a program directed by Nabila El-Bassel and Neeraj Kaushal from Columbia University’s School of Social Work. Located in Jordan and Turkey, these studies examine the mental and physical health needs of female Syrian refugees living outside camps, focusing explicitly on interpersonal violence.
The Tunisian Transition Oral History Project
January 2014 - December 2017
Columbia University Office of the President & INCITE

This project documents the role that the technical government played in securing the transition to democracy in Tunisia. It considers whether the Tunisian model could be exported to other settings.
INCITE provides research and training opportunities across the educational spectrum, from high school students to postdoctoral fellows. We also provide similar support for community members outside the academy.

**INCITE Graduate Fellows**

**INCITE**

INCITE hosts several graduate research assistants from the Department of Sociology. These researchers receive workspace and financial and material support to pursue independent research projects. Current initiatives by INCITE Graduate Fellows include: “Innovation at the intersection: The effective practices and processes of organizing” (Terrell Frazier); “Understanding the management of disaster through the control of risk” (Ryan Hagen); “Exploring the historical basis of polarization in the U.S.” (Mark Hoffman); “Understanding current polarization in discussion networks” (Byungkyu Lee); “Accounting for the structural bases of the Abolition movement” (Kinga Makovi); “An ethnographic account of NYC Funeral Homes” (Kristin Murphy); and “A study of de-institutionalization in the United States” (Alix Rule).
INCITE Short Courses

INCITE & Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

INCITE offers an array of two-day short courses on research methods and skill development. The courses are free of charge to Columbia University affiliates and community members. Short course topics have included ethnographic interviewing, oral history, academic writing, and quantitative analysis for textual data.

Oral History Master of Arts

Founded in 2008
Tuition Supported**

Oral History Master of Arts (OHMA) is an interdisciplinary Master of Arts degree program in the field of oral history that focuses on interviewing methodologies and interpretative methods. OHMA links social sciences and humanities research across six disciplines: History, Sociology, Literature, Anthropology, Psychology, and Public Health. Seeking ever-greater inclusivity, OHMA increasingly pursues grant-funded support to underwrite tuition fees for students from under-sourced groups. The program has more than 125 alums.

oralhistory.columbia.edu
Mellon Interdisciplinary Fellows

Founded in 2000
Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**

The Mellon Interdisciplinary Fellows Program brings together advanced, talented graduate students from the humanities and social sciences at Columbia University to foster their ability to incorporate the methods, approaches, and knowledge of the humanities and social sciences into their research and to provide an intellectual and material environment for completing high-quality dissertations. It has about 200 alums.

Resources for Nonprofits

INCITE

INCITE supports organizations in and around New York City that promote just, equitable societies. We invite small social justice organizations to use our resources, including but not limited to meeting or small event space, funds for food, access to computers or software, printing, interviewing instruction, survey distribution, and other miscellaneous support.

Social Science Summer

Tuition and INCITE

The Social Sciences Summer at Columbia University is a non-degree high school exchange program providing students with an understanding of the principles and skills for designing and conducting social research. The program is open to students from China and English as Second Language students from the New York City region.
INCITE funds an array of public stand-alone events, workshops, and conferences. Support is provided by INCITE’s Paul F. Lazarsfeld Lecture Series, with events and programming that embody and honor Lazarsfeld’s commitment to improving research methods in order to address vital cultural and social concerns.
The INCITEment series

As people researching and working during a period of strident anti-intellectual and anti-scientific sentiment, INCITE stimulates conversation among university community members and the broader public that can benefit from the resources and expertise of citizens, activists, and academics. This public series invites individuals who envision a way forward and can speak to the opportunities that are both seized and missed in our society today.

The series launched in 2017 with two events: “At the Intersection of Academia and Activism with John D’Emilio” hosted by the Columbia Center for Oral History Research for its LGBTQ+ Oral History of Columbia Alums, and “Despair is Not A Political Strategy;” a panel discussion with activists from vulnerable communities in the NYC region.

Networks and Time

This workshop is a venue for faculty and graduate students from Columbia and elsewhere to present innovative works-in-progress on social networks, historical sociology, and the modeling of time.

Oral History Workshop

A recurring, year-long series about the impact of oral history methodologies on distinct disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities.
INCITE affiliates have conceived and designed four major initiatives to be launched during the 2017-18 academic year. Currently funded by INCITE, we will expand these ambitious projects with external support. Each features innovative designs for understanding and, in some initiatives, responding to work, health, and political challenges in today’s U.S.

Those interested in learning more about these projects or providing support, please contact Michael Falco at mf2727@columbia.edu or 212.854.9489.
American Life Histories
Project: Part II

Amidst an historical transition between presidential administrations with deeply diverging views on diversity and inclusivity in America, we have designed the multi-year American Life Histories project to conduct research on and build an archive of ways Americans experience the promises and failures of U.S. democracy.

This is the most ambitious national oral history project since the Federal Writers’ American Life Histories Project in the 1930s. It launches in 36 communities and expects to capture 6,000 hours of audio and video that record perspectives of 2,500 Americans.

Innovating upon the Federal Writers’ Life Histories Project, we use social science sampling techniques and ethnographic field notes to ensure the archive accurately represents the heterogeneity of the United States. This trove of representative, qualitative data for scholars and others to hear, read, and analyze rises above the partisan, decontextualized accounts that litter mass and social media records.

Creating Democratic Citizens

Producing democratic citizens is as vital today as ever, and education is a major factor in that process. This project examines the effects of an undergraduate liberal arts education on cultivating in individuals the qualities linked to democratic citizenship and the extent to which people with these qualities participate in developing and sustaining democratic associations.

We accomplish this through innovative data collection and analyses at the level of undergraduate schools and that of individuals and their organizational associations. Over seven years, we collect multiple waves of data on schools, current and former students, and organizations in which students participate. We produce analytic findings beginning in the second year.
Research Aid for Community Health (REACH)

The health care of Americans remains an issue that stirs the political waters, impacts the productivity of the U.S. economy and wreaks havoc on people’s lives. In this context, we are establishing REACH at INCITE to focus solely on supporting health-related non-profit organizations with research expertise they can use to build healthy communities.

REACH joins the research capacity of Columbia University to the explicit and implicit research requirements of these nonprofits, especially smaller organizations. Through such partnerships, REACH will not only enable nonprofits to use research to meet their immediate programmatic and management needs but will help vitalize collaborative initiatives and networks among public, private and nonprofit actors to produce and sustain community health.

The Future of Low-Wage Work in America

The labor market for low-wage workers is a major political, economic, social, and health issue. INCITE has a constellation of research projects to help understand what low-wage service workers want from work and to investigate the impact of new forms of low-wage worker organization on workers’ influence in the workplace, the labor market, and politics.

Through our existing relationships with labor organizations, we have exclusive access to a mobile application that allows low-wage workers to organize across diverse industries and occupations.

The research we have generated—and continue to generate—demonstrates the importance of a dedicated research center with an evolving agenda of activities focused only on studying low-wage and service work in America. By January 2019 we expect to have support in place to start formalizing such a center, housed at INCITE, committed to the concerns and needs of low-wage workers.
The following is a sampling of projects recently completed by INCITE and its research affiliates.
New York Philharmonic Subscribers, 1842-Present

2012-2015
Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

INCITE affiliates Shamus Khan (Columbia University), Fabien Accominotti (London School of Economics), and a team of INCITE research assistants developed the New York Philharmonic subscriber database. This archive contains names, addresses, and seat locations for Philharmonic subscribers from the mid-nineteenth century to 2013. More than 500,000 subscriber records have been transcribed and are available in this database.

The research team analyzed the relationship between subscribers’ seat locations on specific concert dates in various concert halls and where they lived. This analysis found partial support for the classic account of monopolization and exclusivity of high culture by the wealthy, but it also identified a subscriber group who did not share the social practices, occupational backgrounds, or residential choices of more elite patrons.
Robert Wood Johnson Health & Society Scholars Program

2012-2016
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

As one of only six sites in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Health & Society Scholars Program, INCITE promoted innovative and interdisciplinary research in population health and created working groups and public events through internal funding.

Over the program’s 12 years, we trained 26 scholars and directed more than $1.5 million towards myriad projects that studied America’s most pressing health challenges.

Summer for Respect

May 2014 - August 2014
United Food and Commercial Workers

To mark the 50th anniversary of Freedom Summer, United Food and Commercial Workers and INCITE collaborated to document the economic disenfranchisement that afflicts our country. Students from around the U.S., hand-in-hand with Walmart worker-leaders, participated in an intensive summer of organizing and oral history documentation.

The 20 students were embedded in five communities: Dallas, Chicago, Central Florida, Southern California, and Cincinnati-Dayton. We are currently analyzing the archive of material and drafting a manuscript based on the students’ joint work.
Understanding Autism Project
January 2009 - December 2016
National Institutes of Health (Multiple Awards)

This project was devoted to understanding what led to the increase in autism prevalence in the U.S. from the 1970s to 2010s. We made significant progress in ascertaining individual and community-level factors associated with increased risk of the disease.

Among other contributions, our findings point to new understandings of how risk factors are expressed, how de novo mutations increase risk, and how the disease spatially clusters at birth and at diagnosis. These results suggest the social dynamics of diagnosis and how changes in the diagnostic path relate to intellectual disabilities.

Methodologically, we established the capacity to link complex administrative datasets from three very different sources. The combined dataset we used comprises nearly 5.5 million children and is the largest population-level dataset to include information on autism and Assisted Reproductive Technology.

Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project
January 2014 - August 2016
Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

This oral history project on the artist Robert Rauschenberg pushed the boundaries of oral history practice. It included illustrated transcripts and technical interviews—a new form of oral history that captures in-depth discussions about the materials and methods Rauschenberg used to create his art.

The archive, soon available through Columbia University Libraries, encompasses 60 narrators and 179 hours of audio and video with narratives that explore the global art scene in the 1960s and ‘70s. INCITE is currently writing a manuscript to accompany this archive. In May 2017, oral histories from the archive were included in the audio guide for the NYC Museum of Modern Art exhibition, “Robert Rauschenberg: Among Friends.”
Since 2012, INCITE has received funding support from many individual donors and the following organizations:

- The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- The Atlantic Philanthropies
- The Brooklyn Greenway Initiative
- Carnegie Corporation of New York
- Columbia University Office of the President
- Columbia University Office of the Provost
- The Harriman Institute
- The National Institutes of Health
- The National Science Foundation
- New York University-Abu Dhabi
- Phoenix House
- The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation
- The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- The Russell Sage Foundation
- The Social Science Research Council
- United Food and Commercial Workers
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