



TASA The Australian
Sociological Association

Applied Sociology Contact Email for March 2015

Greeting all,

A Master's Degree in Applied Sociology

One University, albeit, an American University, is offering online Master's Degree in Sociology which is designed for Applied Sociologists. The University of Alabama, Birmingham are running the programme and estimate that if you have the time to take the 10 on line course you could have the degree. However, they suggest a more realistic trajectory part-time students would be 5 semesters. The degree does not require a thesis and the faculty assists students in undertaking a six-hour applied/community capstone project in your area of interest as a concluding exercise. I don't know if they accept non-Americans but as it is on line it should not present a problem. So if you feel like broadening your background, give it a go.

I mentioned Terry Pratchett in my last letter and last week he died. The media describe Pratchett as a fantasy author, which misses the point of his stories. What he did in his Diskworld series, was to create a world and a cast of characters that were representative of people and institutions in this world. He could then examine social issues in this world, without actually referring to or groups or individuals in this world and without upsetting individuals or groups that are. The ideas and people he uses in the main are taken from the folklore and mythology of various communities around the world and he makes them deal with issues from this world. (See "The Folklore of Diskworld" that he wrote with Jacqueline Simpson to see how earth bound Diskworld is.) He can made stories about religion, race relations, migrants or other social issues on Diskworld, which can make us uncomfortable about our social issues. If you start with the early books you will get to know the characters who make the whole thing real. I don't see him as a fantasy writer but a sociologist with a unique twist to his presentation.

Whilst I was at the annual Conference, I took the opportunity to visit the University bookshop. Browsing through the shelves I came across a book called "30 – Second Economics" Edited by Donald Marron. This seemed a novel approach. On examination I discovered it offered an explanation of 50 economic theories that could be read in 30 seconds plus other bits of relevant information. It is divided into eight sections, with a glossary relevant to each section and a profile of the leading exponent. If you need to refer to economic theory it give you a quick picture of what it is about and the variations that have arisen around it. If one or more Sociologists had the energy, a similar version for sociology would be a valuable tool.

My venture into another Bookshop, this time a very large second hand, brought me to several interesting books. The load was so heavy, I thought they might not let me on plane. However, they didn't ask to weigh them so that was no problem. One of the books caught my eye because it was edited by a friend from the past. The book, "Social Psychology" published in 1981, made me think again of the connection between psychology and sociology. Looking up social psychology in the Collins Dictionary of Sociology, I found it had an each way bet. It identifies is as 'a sub-field of both psychology and sociology'. As sociologists I wonder how much we consider or report any psychological issues that are raised by our research. Do we recognise them if they are there. I will have a read of the book and get back to you on where I think Social Psychology fits.

Alan Scott, Continuing Education Officer