

Applied Sociology Contact Email for May 2015

Greeting all,

You will have noted, I hope, that Lyndal-Joy Thompson has relinquished the position of Convenor for this Thematic Group, because of her imminent departure for the U.S. and that I have agreed to act as Convenor until the next Conference in November. I don't intend to continue after that time so all of you other members have 6 months to seriously consider whether you can, given your other commitments, take on leadership of our group.

In the first instance for the remainder of her appointment. Then if you wish, you can nominate for a further 3 year appointment. The job is largely what you make of it, but in many ways it is one of the most important positions in TASA. Those in Applied Sociology do not live in a fellowship of reasonably like-minded sociologists. They are more likely to meet some hostility or people who have no idea what sociology is about or have had a bad experience of sociology when doing their BA. I heard a woman being interviewed on the radio about her degree course. She listed the subjects and finished by saying, "and Sociology which was a complete waste of time". When I was convenor, I started these monthly contact emails so that once a month members would find that their professional Association acknowledged their membership and offered them something sociological to think about. After my three year term as Convenor, I was asked to continue writing the contact email and save the incoming Convenor the task.

This arrangement has worked quite well, I think, and am happy to go on doing it. What we need now is a member willing to take on the leadership role and help TASA find ways for the Professional development of the Members and finding new ways to link our Applied Sociologists into an active fellowship of like-minded people. I'm sure there is more than one of you who could take on the job. Please give it serious thought and let me know if you would like your name to be put forward. If you would like to talk to me about it, I am available on Skype, email (sjaicb@midcoast.com.au) or phone (02 6656 2587).

An Article in 'Sociological Theory', (Vol. 32(4) 283–306, 2014) by David Gibson, has an interesting article on "**Enduring Illusions: The Social Organization of Secrecy and Deception**". In it he draws attention to Sociologists like Goffman and Simmel, who have theorize that people comply with the dictates of states and other organizations out of self-interest or because of the perceived legitimacy of those in authority. Gibson argues that some organizations, however, are based on lies, or secrets, and it would seem that these should be very short-lived, given how easy it is for the truth to escape. Yet points out there are many organization built on lies and secrets that successfully maintain their lies for years or even decades. He therefore suggests that sociologists ought to be able to develop a sociology of political, corporate and organisational deception and the part it plays in the lives of ordinary people.

The objective of his article is to develop the groundwork for a theory of long-term secrets and lies of the sort that reside at the heart of many organizations, including national governments, religious organisations and commercial concerns. His examples include the Catholic Church's cover-up of the scope of sexual abuse of children by priests, the Big Tobacco Companies cover-up of the health consequences of smoking, the doping epidemic in professional cycling, and the regime in North Korea.

He suggests ways that allow organisations to get away with lies, even when many people still believe the lies even though they are being challenged. What insights do we sociologists bring these social scenarios.

Alan Scott,

Continuing Education Officer & Acting Convenor