

## Contact Email for October 2014

Greetings All,

In 1981 Praeger published a "Handbook of Applied Sociology" edited by Marvin Olsen and Michael Micklin. In its Preface it tells us that "The frontiers of applied sociology are vast and raw, and the wilderness beyond is virtually unknown." That alone would probably have put many people off of applied sociology. People coming new to a subject don't want to be told that what they hope to study is an area that is "virtually unknown". In the prologue it further identifies failures of sociology. "Major policy debates and decisions dealing with race over the last two decades have proceeded in the absence of really adequate evidence. Technical and methodological deficiencies, and the lack of sufficient research, disables sociology in achieving legitimacy as a guide to public policy." Further, "the resistances of established social institutions and political pressures generated on significant issues can also undermine this legitimacy..... All or almost all policy-oriented researchers are in some way flawed or limited by their own methodology, or their implications are debated on these grounds ." This down putting of sociology pervades the rest of the book.

In 1981 I was a busy applied sociologist and had been since 1969, so I went back and looked at the sociology I had applied over that period. I found I had:

- Conducted research for the Royal Commissions on the Australian Government Administration.
- Conducted research for the Royal Commission on Human Relationships
  - Conducted research for the Western Melbourne Community Relations Committee.  
*(With this study I produced the first ethnographical maps of Melbourne, setting out the population distribution, by place of birth, of the major migrant groups.)*
- Conducted research for the Gladstone Area Social Development Board.
  - Conducted research in every State on the Social Effects of Major Industrial Accidents.  
Funded by ARGC. *(This study was the trigger that led to enquiries in each State and the establishment of Work Cover.)*
- Conducted research on the employment of the disabled.
- Presented two submissions to Senate Enquiries.
- Presented two papers at an OECD conference.
- Presented papers to SAANZS in Melbourne, Canberra, and Sydney.
- Presented two papers each to Sociology Departments in Melbourne, Boston
- Presented paper to the Royal Society of Arts, Melbourne.
- Presented paper to Australian Health Commission, Adelaide.
- Presented paper to the South Australian Trade and Labour Council.
- Presented paper presented to Rehabilitation staff from Rehabilitation Centers in Victoria.
- Chapter in book published by the OECD
- Chapters in two books published by The Commonwealth Schools Commission.
- Chapter in book published by the Canberra CAE.
  - Wrote book on ways of assessing abilities of the disabled or injured. Publish by David Syme & Co.. *(Used as a text in at least two Universities and the work assessment design was later incorporated into the Victoria Work Cover legislation.)*
- Published fourteen results of research undertaken by ITIM Research.
- Article published in the 1976 Military Review Journal. *(Won prize for the best article of the year.)*
- Gave four interviews on the ABC radio and two on the international service.
- Gave one interview on Channel 10 television.

As you can see, the work covered federal government and local government requests, research for trade unions, international presentations and publications. Plenty of work in an environment not at all like the one Olsen and Micklin painted. Twentythree of the thirty contributors to their book were in academic positions. In 2008 two more academics Stephen Steele and Jammie Price published 'Applied Sociology' the difference is a positive introduction the tools available to the applied sociologist and how to use them. Applied Sociology is a relatively recent name for studies going back thousands of years. See Mayhew in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ibn Khaldun in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Romans in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Greeks in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, the Chinese in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and many

others in between. Since that time things have changed. For economic and political reasons convincing people of the value of sociological research may be difficult but now is a time when we are needed. Politics and economics are not the answer. Social studies are not the answer. Positive and indeed aggressive SOCIOLOGY is more than ever needed.

*Alan Scott*, Continuing education officer