



**TASA** The Australian  
Sociological Association

## Applied Sociology Contact Email for June 2017

For the Terry Pratchett enthusiasts, I have just finished re-reading 'Thud'. If there is a book for today then this is it. It deals with two different groups of beings living in the same community who have a past history of being in conflict and what could be about to happen. In Discworld fashion Terry shows a way to sort the conflict out. One short sentence in this book stood out for me: "What kind of creature defines itself by hatred?" Despite its fictitious presentation this book is about sociology at work.

I have previously mentioned my concern that people have been telling the world that Sociology is a waste of time. This week I was talking with two former nurses who had done Sociology for their degree, they told me that it was the most boring subject that they had ever done and they could see no practical application for it. It's many years since I was in touch with university sociology, but I don't remember much emphasis being put on application outside of university requirements. One lecturer told me recently that they had never had a lesson on questionnaire design.

Today I looked at the *Journal of Sociology* to see if there was anything to jog my mind for something I could write about. What struck me was the inside front cover listing the editorial staff. Every single one of them was from a university. Then I checked the contributors, every single one of them was from a university. My conclusion is that this publication has nothing to do with sociology per se, rather it deigned to meet the university requirement of being published in a refereed journal, or perish. In addition to the expectation that you will be able to publish a book, or two, that will mark you for promotion. It also helps to maintain the dominant theory of the department. That is how a university works and if you want that system you must conform to it because it applies not just to Sociology but to every department. However, if doing sociology is your aim you will have to think about what the community wants from you and how you can present it to them in a way they can understand and act upon, which is not easily found in academic journals.

Apart from two part-time stints at Monash University and one longer one in a major U.S. University, the biggest portion of my life (before superannuation was invented) has been spent using sociology to meet problems in society, mostly in Australia and some in the U.S.. In both places, I was the initiator of change in the society but the public credit of course goes not to me but those who employed me. For instance, I did work for two Royal Commissions and I am in the list of consultants, quoted in the text of the document, but the credit goes to the Chairperson of the Commission.

I have 48 publications listed in the National Library. I did the first study in the world on the social effects of industrial accidents. (Confirmed by the Australian Grants Commission.) My work was recognised by TASA when I received the inaugural Sociology in Action Award but what impression did this make on the teaching of Sociology? Whilst keeping within the university system, did departments say we must teach people how to do Questionnaires? However, given the poorly produced questionnaires being circulated by professional researchers, that produce more desired outcomes, rather than real outcomes, who is going to teach them? Everyone one thinks they can write a questionnaire, but to collect real data it takes a lot more knowledge and understanding to produce a questionnaire that will collect real, usable data. Do they tell students how to deal with community problems in a way that the community will understand? Who would teach them?

The Applied Sociology leadership team has been in contact with the Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology (AACCS), in the USA, who publish the *Journal of Applied Social Science*. James Lee, the editor, would be happy to receive submissions from Australia. Please encourage the Applied Sociologists you know to consider having a look at the journal and, where possible, submitting something for publication. See their website: <https://au.sagepub.com/en-gb/oce/journal-of-applied-social-science/journal202060#submission-guidelines>.

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