

Summary Documentation of Virtual Interorganizational Applied and Clinical Sociology Meet and Greet on May 19th, 2022

The NCSA Committee on Applied and Public Sociology¹ was honored to organize and host an inter-organizational Applied and Clinical Sociology Meet and Greet on Thursday, May 19th, from 2:00-3:15 PM EST. We heard input from our four panelists (presented below with [embedded links](#) to resources) about their organizational backgrounds within the broad landscape of applied, clinical, and/or other public sociology, followed by a brief discussion of audience questions. Twelve participants took time to learn about organizational needs and strategies, along with challenges related to contemporary applied and clinical sociology.

- **Karen Albright, Ph.D.**, is an *Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Colorado (CU) School of Medicine, Department of Medicine, Division of General Internal Medicine and Associate Director, Denver-Seattle Center of Innovation (COIN), Department of Veterans Affairs*. She is immediate Past Chair of the [Sociological Practice and Public Sociology \(SPPS\)](#), a section of the [American Sociological Association](#), and past chair (2019-20) of the [American Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology](#). She explained that SPPS is a longstanding section of ASA but equally hampered and helped by the predominantly academic constituency of the ASA. Honing in on a common denominator, SPPS used the umbrella of professional development to serve academic members interested in applied work as well as “academic adjacent” members (i.e., individuals who conduct research and policy work outside academia and are close enough to find value in ASA, e.g. RAND). The professional development webinars that delivered skillset training are posted on [Sociological Practice and Public Sociology \(SPPS\)](#) for non-members for a limited time. Dr. Albright shared the latest data on academic sociology jobs; in 2020, 128 advertised assistant professor jobs met 638 PhDs awarded in the same year (2019 was only slightly better with a ratio of 641 awarded PhDs for approximately 250 positions). She emphasized that Sociology is ‘losing’ these graduates. There is a need to connect sociological skillsets to fields because the sociological toolbox has a lot to offer for the world’s problems. Sociological voices could more effectively weigh in within and beyond academia.
- **Mindy Fried, M.S.W., PhD** is the *Creator/Host of [The Shape of Care](#) podcast*, the founder and *Principal of the consulting group [Arbor Consulting Partners](#), Co-Director of [Hoopla Productions](#) and author of [Caring for Red: A Daughter’s Memoir](#)*. She was previously a Research Professor at Boston College. Dr. Fried is a very active applied sociologist herself and has organized applied sociology panels for decades at the winter meetings of Sociologists for Women (SWS) in Society. She invites local applied sociologists to connect and share with applied and academic SWS members. SWS is rooted in feminist principles and promotes feminist values; it is a nimble organization that has responded to the needs of BIPOC and LGBT scholars in the past. Dr. Fried also mentored a plethora of graduate students who aspired to applied work over the last few years. Dr. Albright and Dr. Fried are already collaborating. They will organize a series of open and free webinars for applied sociologists around three significant issues: Tackling the job market, establishing a support group for existing applied sociologists, and incorporating applied sociology into academic curricula and work. Her latest big project is to provide a home within SWS for applied sociologists. Along these lines, she is co-creating a website portal that includes videos and podcasts of SWSers, job announcements and info, a peer mentoring group, and an applied

¹ The workgroup who organized this meeting consisted of Chad Menning, Gail McGuire, Mary Senter, Colleen Wynn, and Daniela Jauk-Ajamie. Summary Report by Daniela Jauk-Ajamie.

sociology award. In this vein, a [collaboration with Applied Worldwide](#) has been established that features SWS members on the portal. The first meeting of a Peer Mentoring group that focuses on APPLIED SOCIOLOGY will be held on June 17th from 1:00-2:30 pm/EST. [Please complete this form](#) if you plan to join.

- **Melodye Lehnerer, PhD**, is a *Certified Clinical Sociologist* at the College of Southern Nevada and serves as Certification Chair. Dr. Lehnerer presented slides and a brief overview of the history of the Association of Applied and Clinical Sociologists (AACS), which started as the “Clinical Sociology Association” in 1983 and has included certifications as validations of the profession since its onset. Since 2005 it has carried the name AACS and currently offers two different certification tracks. *Certified Applied Sociologists* use sociological theories, concepts, and methods to carry out the same examinations with the primary purpose of translating findings to improve the understanding of non-academic audiences (clients, communities, policy, etc.). *Certified Clinical Sociologists* use sociological theories, concepts, and methods to translate findings and design, implement, and evaluate interventions in a creative and rights-based way. More certifications have taken place in recent years for Clinical Sociology, and one can [learn about certification](#) (which is a presentation based peer review process) on the AACS website. The [International Sociological Association \(ISA\)](#) has a large Research Committee on clinical sociology, and there were more international requests for certification in clinical sociology. The ISA also has excellent and free teaching resources, and Dr. Lehnerer recommended the video [What is Clinical Sociology?](#) by Dr. Gary David.
- **Dawn Tawwater, PhD**, is a Professor at the Department of Sociology and Social Work at Austin Community College and a *Doctoral Instructional Assistant at the Department of Anthropology at Texas State University*. She currently serves as President (2021-2022) of [The Association for Humanist Sociology \(AHS\)](#). While not explicitly naming themselves as “applied” or “clinical” sociologists, the AHS engages in applied practices such as interactive art pop-ups at the meetings. Members also engage in direct fieldwork at conferences to intervene and help out the local community (Dr. Tawwater gave the example of clean up work and trash cataloguing post hurricane). The AHS is very interdisciplinary and does not use the label “applied”, but applied sociology takes place through social action and scholarly activism. Members see themselves as “activists” (as they do not get paid for their community-engaged work). The next annual meeting takes place in Mexico City from Nov 2-Nov 6, 2022.

In the discussion, the question of (living) wages for applied work came up first. The non-profit sector often does not offer those; UX research, in contrast, is highly paid but might be an ethical challenge. Dr. Tawwater provocatively stated that neoliberal systems might love to see applied sociologists turning to commercialized sectors instead of human rights work. Dr. Fried and Dr. Tawwater agreed that one has to think about where your own moral compass is and where one wants to put their work, and there are “things in-between” as working for larger and better-paying nonprofits or working for consulting groups. Dr. Albright shared that she works on training materials for graduate schools based on grant-funded research on non-academic Sociology PhDs. She and her research partner identified 621 Sociology PhDs outside of academia and followed up with 50 in-depth interviews. She posed that a pain point are actually academic salaries. According to BLS data, in 2019-20, the academic mean wage for sociologists was \$66,000.00; for sociologists in state governments, the mean is \$105,000.00; in professional services \$98,000.00-100,000.00.

While Dr. Fried and Dr. Albright strongly agreed that NOW is the time for clinical and applied work and that there is a need for collaboration and shared resources – establishing these resources and networks is also tricky. People who serve professional organizations (like all present) are not getting paid to do this. Ways must be found to compensate for people’s time, so there can be sustainable development.

If you are interested in the work of the NCSA Committee on Applied and Public Sociology ow want to join us please contact our chair Chadwick L. Menning Menning clmenning@bsu.edu.

