



**ASSOCIATION FOR APPLIED & CLINICAL SOCIOLOGY**  
*Sociology at Work*

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### **Interview with William Burr**

**A doctoral student at Loyola University in Chicago, who attended his first AACCS conference in Norfolk last year**

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**Tell me a little about yourself- what made you decide to come to AACCS?**

I actually attended last year's annual conference at the suggestion of my dissertation committee. I'm using a rather ambitious qualitative dataset to write my dissertation, which posed a number of methodological challenges for me as I attempted to adapt quantitative logics of inquiry to my expansive qualitative data. Thankfully, Loyola has a rather enterprising sociology department that is committed to methodological innovation and supportive of applied research. In fact, several AACCS Certified Practitioners are department alums! My committee encouraged me to use my time at AACCS, surrounded by applied sociologists, to "troubleshoot" my methods section in an environment rich with methodological diversity.

**How is AACCS different than other conferences you've attended?**

AACCS works hard to foster a collegial atmosphere. The conference format tends to be more accessible than most other major social science conferences and the organization's leadership is by far more approachable. Furthermore, AACCS offers something for everyone regardless of career stage, from undergraduate competitions to plenaries featuring senior scholars.

**What was your favorite part of AACCS 2018?**

The people! AACCS members are some of the most welcoming scholars I've ever had the pleasure of meeting. Everyone is genuinely interested in one another's intellectual pursuits and eager to collaborate in furtherance of the field of applied and clinical sociology. The level of engagement and mutual excitement during each session is really something to behold.

## **How has the AACCS conference helped you in your educational or career planning?**

Well, the methods section of my dissertation was certainly stronger after attending the AACCS conference! Truthfully, I've made professional connections and friendships through my involvement with AACCS that will last my entire career, if not lifetime.

## **What advice would you give other new student attendees for AACCS 2019?**

Participate! Participate! Participate! You will get out of AACCS only as much as you put in. So, say, "Yes." Take chances. Opportunities for engagement await you around every corner, in every session, during every reception. The opportunities to develop your research interests, professional network, and sociological skill set will find you at AACCS, but you must be prepared to make the most of them.

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### **Interview with Dr. Cathleen Appelt**

#### **A faculty member at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, who attended her first AACCS conference in Cleveland in 2017**

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#### **Tell me a little about yourself- what made you decide to come to AACCS?**

Before joining the sociology faculty at Duquesne in 2014, I worked in medical research. I coordinated both large health services research projects and some clinical research studies at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. Most of this research focused on health equity and services for underserved or otherwise vulnerable populations of veterans, including African-American veterans, older adults, and veterans with severe mental illnesses. I also completed a three-year postdoctoral research training program (NIMH T32) in the School of Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh, during which time most of my work focused on improving general medical outcomes for persons with schizophrenia. One could say that I spent the first ten years or so of my career working as an applied sociologist in a medical context. Since coming to Duquesne, I have had the opportunity to transition the context of my work from a medical to a community setting, where health and illness (including health inequality) are primarily shaped. Currently, I am involved in

both applied and academic modes of research and am continually seeking ways to balance, and within some projects, to integrate these two approaches. When I first came to AACS in 2017, I was looking for others who were using sociology to make a difference in the lives of others and who also saw the potential to generate knowledge of interest to the discipline through applied and community-engaged research activities.

### **How is AACS different than other conferences you've attended?**

I so enjoyed the 2017 conference, that I submitted three abstracts for presentation in 2018! Unfortunately, I was unable to travel in 2018 due to an injury and had withdrawal my presentations from the schedule. Reflecting on my experiences at the 2017 meeting, I think what made it so great – and different from the meetings of some other professional societies – was the exceptionally high level of engagement among AACS during the paper sessions and workshops. In fact, I am planning to present two more papers at the 2019 AACS Conference in Portland as I am certain that sharing my work with AACS members will improve the final products.

### **What was your favorite part of AACS 2017?**

Again, I would say the high levels of engagement of AACS members. While I have enjoyed presenting my work at annual meetings of other sociological societies and have received some valuable feedback; presenting at AACS was entirely different experience. In 2017, I and my historian co-author, Andrew T. Simpson, presented findings from our community-engaged project focused on building a vocational pipeline to health-related careers for female, African American high school students. We were struck by the large number of attendees at the paper session in which we presented and even more so by their degree of participation. In addition to fielding numerous questions and comments, we had the opportunity to engage in a large group discussion with attendees about future directions for this collaborative work. Whether during formal sessions or informal chatting among attendees, I found AACS members to be supportive, inclusive, and genuinely excited about their own work and that of others. Further, I found AACS members are generous with their time and attention, willing to listen actively and provide constructive feedback to one another.

### **How has the AACS conference helped you in your career?**

Although I have only attended one AACS meeting so far, it has been a great help to me during my time as a junior faculty member. While at the 2017 meeting, I met some great sociologists, with whom I have remained in contact. In addition to learning about

some great opportunities, including: an invitation to serve as a panelist during a session at the 2018 AACCS Conference; the opportunity to review an article for the organization's journal, JASS; and the opportunity to share my experiences through this interview!

**What advice would you give other new faculty attendees for AACCS 2019?**

Participate! Introduce yourself to others and do not hesitate to participate, not only in the sessions and workshops, but in informal conversations between sessions and in other areas of the conference hotel where members are gathered.