

# Virginia Kuulei Berndt, PhD

Assistant Professor, Sociology  
Texas A&M International University  
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## EDUCATION:

- Ph.D. – Sociology, University of Delaware (2021)  
Comprehensive Exam Areas: Health and Sociological Theory  
Dissertation: *Women’s Embodied Experiences with Contraception and its Medicalization*  
(Chair: Ann V. Bell, PhD | Committee: Asia Friedman, PhD; Barret Michalec, PhD; Krystale Littlejohn, PhD)
- M.A. – Sociology, Lehigh University (2016)  
Thesis: *Different Disasters, Differential Impacts: The Effect of Droughts and Floods on Women’s HIV Burden in Developing Nations* (Chair: Kelly F. Austin, PhD | Committee: Judith Lasker, PhD; Sirry Alang, PhD)
- B.A. – Sociology and Philosophy, Millersville University of Pennsylvania (2013)  
Thesis: *Life, Money, and Liberty: Religious Frames and the Contraceptive Clause of the Affordable Care Act* (Chair: Carrie Lee Smith, PhD | Committee: Frederika Schmitt, PhD; Ryan Orr, PhD)  
Departmental Honors
- A.A. – Social Sciences, Harrisburg Area Community College (2011)  
Highest Honors

## ACADEMIC POSITIONS:

Assistant Professor of Sociology – Texas A&M International University (2021-present)

## PUBLICATIONS:

### BOOKS:

Brown, Brian and **Virginia Kuulei Berndt**. *Body Art (Arts for Health)*. Under Contract with Emerald Publishing.

### PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES:

Manzer, Jamie L., **Virginia Kuulei Berndt**, and Ann V. Bell. 2022. “Intersections between Culture, Contraception, Knowledge and the Body in the USA.” *Culture, Health & Sexuality* (Online First). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2022.2141330>.

Manzer, Jamie L., **Virginia Kuulei Berndt**, and Ann V. Bell. 2022. “Comparing methods of long-acting reversible contraception: A qualitative study of Delaware women’s perceptions of intrauterine devices and the implant.” *Contraception* 113: 73-77.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.contraception.2022.04.001>.

**Berndt, Virginia Kuulei** and Ann V. Bell. 2021. “‘This is What the Truth is’: Provider-patient interactions serving as barriers to contraception.” *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness, and Medicine* 25(5): 613-629. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363459320969775>.

**Berndt, Virginia Kuulei** and Ann V. Bell. 2021. “Contextualizing Barriers to Long-Acting Reversible Contraception in Delaware.” *Contraception* 103(6): 439-443. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.contraception.2021.02.007>.

**Berndt, Virginia Kuulei** and Kelly F. Austin. 2021. “Drought and Disproportionate Disease: An Investigation of Gendered Vulnerabilities to HIV/AIDS in Less-Developed Nations.” *Population and Environment* 42(3): 379-405. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11111-020-00367-1>.

Austin, Kelly, Mark D. Noble, and **Virginia Kuulei Berndt**. 2021. “Drying Climates and Gendered Suffering: Links Between Drought, Food Insecurity, and Women’s HIV in Less-Developed Countries.” *Social Indicators Research* 154(1): 313-334. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-020-02562-x>.

**Berndt, Virginia Kuulei**. 2020. “Contextualizing Contraceptive Access in Disaster Settings: A Comparison of State-Level Contraceptive Refill Policies, Title X Clinic Availability, and Emergency Refill Laws in California, Texas, South Dakota, and New York.” *Sociological Viewpoints* 34(1): 115-133. [https://doi.org/10.26908/3412020\\_015](https://doi.org/10.26908/3412020_015).

**Berndt, Virginia Kuulei**. 2018. “Gender, Disaster, and Women’s Access to Contraception and Reproductive Healthcare.” *Sociology Compass* 12(12): e12645. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12645>.

Austin, Kelly F., Michelle Choi, and **Virginia Berndt**. 2017. “Trading Sex for Security: Unemployment and the Unequal HIV Burden Among Young Women in Developing Nations.” *International Sociology* 32(3): 343-368. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580917693172>.

- 2020 – Included in *International Sociology*’s Feature on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women as part of a selective collection of articles “related to such a pressing and recurring issue.”
- 2018 – Selected as *International Sociology*’s Topic of the Month, part of a series of monthly topics that “tackle on hot and timely issues of societal interest.”

#### ARTICLES IN PROGRESS:

**Berndt, Virginia Kuulei** and Ann V. Bell. “‘I Just (Don’t) Know:’ Embodied Aversion as an Expansion of Embodied Knowledge.”

#### INTERVIEWS:

2022 – E&E News. (Quoted) “Packing a hurricane go bag? Don’t forget your birth control.” (<https://www.eenews.net/articles/packing-a-hurricane-go-bag-dont-forget-your-birth-control/>).

2022 – Laredo Morning Times. (Full Interview) “Sociology expert weighs in on Roe v. Wade repercussions.” (<https://www.lmtonline.com/local/article/Sociology-expert-discusses-repercussions-of-Roe-V-17265395.php>).

2022 – Dvino Magazine. (Quoted) “Roe v. Wade decision could affect gay marriage.” (electronic copy unavailable).

2021 – Vox. (Quoted) “It’s time to stop describing lifesaving health care as elective.” (<https://www.vox.com/22678393/elective-surgery-nonessential-trans-gender-affirming-hysterectomy>).

2021 – E&E News. (Quoted) “SCOTUS may limit abortion access. So might climate change.” (<https://www.eenews.net/articles/scotus-may-limit-abortion-access-so-might-climate-change/>).

2020 – YASS Magazine. (Full Interview) “Virginia Berndt on body positivity and awareness towards invisible illnesses.” (<https://yassmagazine.org/2020/05/05/virginiaberndt/>).

2020 – UDaily. (Quoted) “How is COVID-19 Impacting Delawareans?” (<https://www.udel.edu/udaily/2020/may/disaster-research-center-covid-19-study-delaware/>).

#### **GRANTS AND AWARDS:**

##### **RESEARCH AND PROGRAMMATIC GRANTS:**

2021-2025 – (Co-Investigator) GET PHIT: Gaining Equity in Training for Public Health Informatics and Technology, awarded to Eric Boerwinkle and Jiaje Zhang of University of Texas Health. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology: The PHIT Workforce Development Program. Role: Co-Investigator, Committed effort: 20%. Subaward amount: \$453,600 over four years.

2021 – (Principal Investigator) University Research Grant, Texas A&M International University: “Women’s Experiences with Contraceptive Access and Use at the U.S.-Mexico Border during the COVID-19 Pandemic.” Award amount: \$10,000

2015 – (Principal Investigator) Dale S. Strohl Research Fellowship Award, Lehigh University: “Global Environmental Degradation and HIV/AIDS Prevalence among Women.” Award amount: \$5,000

##### **TRAVEL GRANTS:**

2016-2020 – Travel Awards from The University of Delaware Office of Graduate Studies, The Disaster Research Center, The Northern European Conference on Emergency and Disaster Studies, and Eastern Sociological Society. Total: \$4,675

2016 – Travel Awards from Lehigh University’s Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Health, Medicine, & Society, and Graduate Student Senate. Total: \$550

2011 – Guy and Helen Swope Travel Award, Harrisburg Area Community College. Award amount: \$1,000.

**AWARDS:**

2020 – Laura Bassi Scholarship (Honorable Mention) – Bassi Foundation, Editing Press

2018 – Annual Hazards and Disasters Student Paper Competition (Winner) – Natural Hazards Center, University of Colorado, Boulder

2016 – Donald T. Campbell Social Science Research Prize (Finalist) – Lehigh University

2016 – Graduate Life Leadership Award (Honorable Mention) – Lehigh University

2013 – Outstanding Sociology & Anthropology Senior Award (Winner) – Millersville University

**RESEARCH ASSISTANT EXPERIENCE:**

2016-2021: University of Delaware  
“Delaware Contraceptive Access Now (Del-CAN) Evaluation.”  
Principal Investigator: Ann V. Bell, PhD

2020: Disaster Research Center (DRC), University of Delaware  
“COVID-19: Community Impacts and Adaptation Study.”  
Principal Investigators: Tricia Wachtendorf, PhD; James Kendra, PhD

2015-2016: Lehigh University  
“Community-Based Research in Bududa, Uganda” (Remote duties from USA).  
Principal Investigator: Kelly F. Austin, PhD

**COURSES TAUGHT:****UNDERGRADUATE:**

SOCI 3304: Sociological Theory

SOCI 4375: Sociology of Disasters

**GRADUATE:**

SOCI 5301: Contemporary Studies of Social Problems (Sociology of Reproduction)

SOCI 5301: Contemporary Studies of Social Problems (Women, Gender, & Health)

SOCI 5305: Sociology of Health & Illness

**TEACHING COURSEWORK AND PROFESSIONALIZATION:**

2021 – Basics of Online Teaching and Learning, CIRTL, University of Delaware

2018 – SOCI 698: Teaching Social Science, University of Delaware

2014-2015 – Teacher Development Program, Lehigh University

**CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:**

2022 – “Contextualizing Contraceptive Access in Disaster Settings.” Southern Sociological Society Annual Conference, Birmingham.

2022 – “‘I Just (Don’t) Know:’ Understandings of and Embodied Aversion toward Contraception.” Eastern Sociological Society Annual Conference, Boston.

2021 – “‘I don’t know how it affects the body’: The relationship between contraception and the anatomical body.” American Sociological Association Annual Conference, Virtual Meeting.

2020 – “‘I really can’t take it out now’: Provider and administrator attitudes and experiences with early LARC removal.” Society for Family Planning Annual Conference, Washington, DC. (Virtual poster presentation due to COVID-19 pandemic).

2020 – “Body Positivity & Bourdieu: An Analysis of the Body Positive Movement’s Past, Present, and Future.” American Sociological Association Annual Conference, San Francisco. (Virtual presentation due to COVID-19 pandemic)

2020 – “Invisible Contradictions: Complicating and Contextualizing Barriers to Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC).” Society for the Study of Social Problems Annual Conference, San Francisco. (Accepted for presentation, canceled due to COVID-19 pandemic)

2020 – “The Persistence of the Paradigm: Providers’ Selective Incorporation of Emerging Contraceptive Knowledge.” Eastern Sociological Society Annual Conference, Philadelphia.

2020 – “The Delaware CAN intervention: Reducing unintended pregnancy by increasing access to contraception.” Eastern Sociological Society Annual Conference, Philadelphia.

2019 – “‘It throws your body off:’ Women and provider knowledges in contraceptive conceptualization and decision-making.” American Sociological Association Annual Conference, New York City.

2019 – “Drying Climates and Disproportionate Disease: Droughts and the HIV Burden among Women in Less-Developed Nations.” Northern European Conference on Emergency and Disaster Studies, Uppsala, Sweden.

2019 – “Present Women’s Healthcare Policies Worsen Future Disaster Impacts.” Organization for the Study of Sex Differences, Washington, D.C. (Accepted for presentation)

2019 – “‘But you kept your ovaries:’ Rethinking hormonal hierarchies and menopausal symptom legitimation among hysterectomy patients.” University of Delaware Department of Sociology & Criminal Justice Annual Graduate Student Conference, Newark.

2019 – “Contrasting Knowledges & Impactful Interactions: Contraceptive Knowledges, Hierarchies, Desires, and Decision-Making at the Interactional Level.” Eastern Sociological Society Annual Conference, Boston.

2019 – “Moving beyond the individual: Providers as potential barriers to contraception.” Eastern Sociological Society Annual Conference, Boston.

2018 – “Different Disasters, Differential Impacts: The Effect of Droughts and Floods on Women’s HIV Burden in Developing Nations.” XIX International Sociological Association World Congress of Sociology, Toronto.

2018 – “Disasters and Women’s Access to Contraceptives.” 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Natural Hazards Workshop, Broomfield, CO.

2018 – “Compromised Contraceptive Access in Disaster Settings: An Analysis of State-Level Contraceptive Policies, Title X Clinic Availability, and Emergency Refill Laws in

North Carolina and Illinois.” University of Delaware Annual Graduate Student Forum, Newark.

2018 – “What is ‘Natural?’ The Medicalization of Contraception and Its Impact on Women’s Contraceptive Understanding and Decision-Making.” Eastern Sociological Society Annual Conference, Baltimore.

2018 – “Women’s Online Chronic Reproductive Illness Forums: Creating & Maintaining Health Disparities?” University of Delaware Department of Sociology & Criminal Justice Annual Graduate Student Conference, Newark.

2017 – “Violence, Sugar, and Sustenance: Intimate Partner Violence against Young Women in Less-Developed Countries involved in Sugar Daddy Relationships.” University of Delaware Annual Graduate Student Forum, Newark.

2017 – “Complicating and Contextualizing Barriers to Contraceptive Use.” Eastern Sociological Society Annual Conference, Philadelphia.

2016 – “Trading Sex for Security: Unemployment and the Unequal HIV Burden Among Young Women in Developing Nations.” Eastern Sociological Society Annual Conference, Boston.

2014 – “Life, Money, and Liberty: Religious Frames and the Contraceptive Clause of the Affordable Care Act” Eastern Sociology Society Annual Conference, Baltimore.

2014 – “Life, Money, and Liberty: Religious Frames and the Contraceptive Clause of the Affordable Care Act” Sociologists for Women in Society Winter Conference, Nashville.

#### **CONFERENCE ORGANIZING & PRESIDING:**

2023 – Organizer: Division of Disabilities/Sport, Leisure, and the Body/Environment and Technology Paper Session – “Invisible Disabilities and the Body in Physical and Virtual Spaces.” Society for the Study of Social Problems.

2023 – Co-Organizer: Division of Health, Health Policy, and Health Services/Sport, Leisure, and the Body/Conflict, Social Action, and Change Paper Session – “Reproductive Bodies and Autonomy.” Society for the Study of Social Problems.

2022 – Co-Organizer: Division of Sport, Leisure, and the Body/Health, Health Policy, and Health Services/Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities/Racial and Ethnic Minorities Paper Session – “Reproductive Justice: Race, Intersectionality, and Health.” Society for the Study of Social Problems.

2021 – Organizer: Division of Sport, Leisure, and the Body/Society and Mental Health Paper Session – “Mind, Body, and Fitness.” Society for the Study of Social Problems.

2021 – Co-Organizer: Division of Health, Health Policy, and Health Services/Global Division Paper Session – “Being Made Vulnerable in the Era of COVID-19: Global Responses and Perspectives.” Society for the Study of Social Problems.

2018 – Presider: Section of Sex and Gender: Roundtable – “Intimate Partner Violence.” American Sociological Association, Philadelphia.

2017 – Moderator: Paper Session – “(en)Gendered History, Governance, & Social Institutions” University of Delaware Annual Graduate Student Forum, Newark.

**INVITED TALKS:**

2022 – “Ecofeminism, HIV, and Droughts: Understanding the Connection between Women’s Health and the Environment.” TAMIU Philosophical Society, Texas A&M International University (Advisor: Jude Galbraith, PhD)

2022 – “Social Warrior for Issues that Matter” course, Texas A&M International University (Professor: Janet M. Carrillo)

2021 – “Entering the Academic Job Market During COVID-19: Guidance on Successful Sociology Placements in Troubling Times,” American Sociological Association Annual Conference

2021 – “Drying Climates and Gendered Suffering,” University of Delaware Disaster Research Center

2021 – Guest Lecture in “Power, Privilege, & Inequality” course, American University (Professor: Zephi Francis)

2020 – Guest Lecture in “Social Statistics” course, Millersville University of Pennsylvania (Professor: Carrie Lee Smith, PhD)

2020 – Guest Lecture in “Medical Sociology” course, University of Florida (Professor: Harvey L. Nicholson Jr., PhD)

2020 – “Hindsight is 2020: COVID-19 Community Impacts,” University of Delaware

2018 – Guest Lecture in “Medical Sociology” course, University of Central Florida (Professor: Harvey L. Nicholson Jr., PhD)

**ACADEMIC SERVICE & AFFILIATIONS:**

**TEXAS A&M INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

- College of Arts & Sciences (COAS):
  - Graduate Council Member (Appointed)
  - TAMIU’s Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Committee (TIDE)
- Job Search Committees:
  - Advanced Assistant/Associate Professor, Criminology
  - Assistant Professor, Public Administration
- Sociology Program:
  - Assessment Co-Coordinator (BA, MA)
  - Master’s Thesis Committee Member: Erica Benavides-Moor
  - Graduate Advisory Committee Member: Iraida Elizondo
- Sames Mentorship Program: Mentor to two local high school seniors
- TAMIU Fashion Society: Faculty Advisor

**AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION – SECTION ON THE SOCIOLOGY OF BODY & EMBODIMENT**

- Social Media Manager: Communications Committee (2020-present)

- Member: Mentorship Committee (2020-present)
- Member: Nominations Committee (2021-2022)
- Contributor: “Ask a Mentor” Column (2021)
- Council Member: Student Representative-Elect (2020-2021)
- Member: Membership Committee (2019-2020)

**UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY & CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

- Graduate Student Council: Jan Burrows Award Committee Chair (2016; 2019)
- Graduate Student Council: Vice-President (2017-2018)
- Graduate Student Council: Graduate Student Government Senator (2017-2018)
- Graduate Student Conference: Keynote Speaker Committee Chair (2018)
- Minority Mentor Lecture Series: Workshop Committee Co-Chair (2020)

**DISASTER RESEARCH CENTER (DRC) AFFILIATE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE (2017-2021)**

- Russell Dynes Summer Scholar (2018, 2019)

**MANUSCRIPT REFEREE SERVICE (BY JOURNAL):**

BMJ Open

Disasters

Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness, & Medicine

Health Education and Behavior

International Journal of Comparative Sociology

International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction

International Sociology

Qualitative Health Research

Qualitative Sociology

Social Problems

Social Science Research

Sociological Inquiry

Sociology Compass

The Lancet Planetary Health

Women’s Health

**PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS:**

Southern Sociological Society (member since 2022)

Society for the Study of Social Problems (member since 2020)

International Sociological Association (member since 2018)

Eastern Sociological Society (member since 2014)

American Sociological Association (member since 2014)

Sociologists for Women in Society (member since 2014)