

IE NEWSLETTER

Institutional Ethnography Division of the Society for the Study of Social Problems

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From the Division Chair Naomi Nichols

It's clearly still winter in Canada. I've spent the day with my children at the Festival Lumiere, riding the luge and roasting marshmallows. It's hard to imagine that soon it will be August and we will be gathering at the 2016 Annual Meeting for the SSSP in Seattle, Washington. This year's theme is Globalizing Social Problems. The idea is to consider how social problems that appear to have a local character are, in fact, influenced by social relations operating globally. This thematic focus fits nicely with how institutional ethnographers tend to understand social phenomena.

I am looking forward to discovering with you all how "Inequalities of gender, race, disability, sexual orientation/identity, aging, health, labor, and class" are produced as objectified forms of social organization that transcend particular local settings or institutional complexes. I look forward to unpacking how people's participation in professional, pop-culture, or academic discourse is coordinated with – and can be traced into – relations of global capitalism. And as always, I look forward to thinking through how the knowledge we produce becomes salient and useful to the people who can use it to de-stabilize relations of oppression and subjugation.

Last week, IE colleagues (Alison Fisher and Jessica Braimoh) and I participated in the Policy Dialogues on Racial Profiling, organized by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. In a couple of weeks, I head to Minneapolis, Minnesota to participate in two days of professional development and discussion with the folks at Praxis International. Whenever I get out of the University, I am more convinced that institutional ethnography is the only way to ethically do sociology in non-academic settings.

But institutional ethnography's utility as a sociology *for* people can only be realized if we can work strategically with others to discover how the relations of oppression people experience are organized in and through the very social relations they (and we, as researchers) participate in. I've recently re-read parts of the 2006 book, *Sociology for Changing the World*, and I'll end with a quote that inspires me: "following from Marx, political activist ethnographers argue that it is 'we,' as individuals and as groups of people, who, through our own practices, coordinate and produce the social world (D. Smith 2005: 49–73). This implies that "we can also collectively change it" (p. 8). Having taken a look at the line-up of conference presentations and critical dialogue sessions organized by the IE community for this coming conference, I anticipate engaging conversations on how we can collectively open up relations of ruling for critical navigation and change.

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AIDS Activist History Project



The **AIDS Activist History Project** has been exploring the social history of AIDS activism. Spearheaded by Alexis Shotwell and Gary Kinsman, we have been learning from activists across Canada, including in Halifax/Nova Scotia, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver. We invite you to check out our (ever-growing) collection, and to check out a recent blog on the work of institutional ethnographers Eric Mykhalovskiy and George W. Smith. <http://www.aidsactivisthistory.ca/aahp-blog/hooking-up-to-social-services-by-janna-klostermann-carleton-university-ottawa-on>

Call for nominations

DOROTHY E. SMITH AWARD FOR SCHOLAR-ACTIVISM

Deadline: 5/1/16

The **Institutional Ethnography Division** is pleased to solicit nominations for the 2016 Dorothy E. Smith Award for Scholar-Activism. This award recognizes the activities of an individual or group who has made substantial contributions to institutional ethnographic scholar-activism in either a single project or some longer trajectory of work. The contributions may involve IE research conducted and used for activist ends, or it may involve activist efforts that have drawn upon or contributed to IE scholarship. The award committee invites members of the division to send a one-page statement describing the contributions of the nominee to Mathew Strang matthew.strang@gmail.com, Suzanne Vaughan at svaughan@asu.edu and Hans Peter de Ruiter hans-peter.de-ruiter@mnsu.edu by May 1, 2016.

Call for Papers

The Journal of Comparative Social Work (<http://journal.uia.no/index.php/JCSW/index>) will publish a special issue on institutional ethnography, spring of 2016. Contact special issue editor Janne Paulsen Breimo (jbr@uin.no) for more information.

The 28th Conference of the Nordic Sociological Conference will take place in Helsinki, Finland, 11th-13th August 2016. The conference theme is "Knowledge-making practices and sociology's global challenge". There will be a working group on institutional ethnography at the conference, and we welcome abstract submissions from across the world (Deadline 22 March). The conference focuses on the critiques of

sociology's conventional knowledge-making practises, and calls us to think together about ways to address the Eurocentrism and parochialism of many of our central concepts and categories. Read more about the conference here: <http://nsa2016.org/>

IE Weekend Workshop

Between June 10-12th and 13-17th 2016, Dorothy Smith and Susan Turner will be offering once again the Institutional Ethnography Weekend Workshop and Weeklong Working Intensives. The sessions focus on IE thinking and practice.

They take place in Toronto, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, in the space of the Centre for Women's Studies in Education.

The weekend and weeklong intensives provide the opportunity for those who are interested in IE or those who have projects in progress to work with Dorothy and myself. The weekend intensives are limited to small practice groups (20) and in the week long intensives are limited to 6. Participants will work with a few other participants and in individual consulting sessions.

General Information can be found at the CWSE website (our last sessions' information is there but the specific information for this June is not yet posted):

http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/cwse/Institutional_Ethnography_Programs/

Also, inquiries can be made to Susan at turnersusanm@gmail.com.

Notes and news from members

Elizabeth Seton Mignacca, PhD, Director of Institutional Assessment at Cayuga Community College presented the contributed paper, "Institutional Ethnography: A Method for the Study of Inequalities," at the Northeast Association of Institutional Research (NEAIR) Conference, Nov. 2, 2015 in Burlington, VT.

Eric Mykhalovskiy, PhD, Associate Professor of Sociology at York University has a new publication: 2016. Making science count: significant risk, HIV Non-disclosure and the science-based criminal law reform: A reflexive analysis. In Stanton, C. and Quirk, H. (Eds.) *Criminalising contagion: Legal and ethical challenges of disease transmission and the criminal law*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 150-74.

Abstract: In Canada, the criminal law governance of HIV non-disclosure is produced through complex relations of knowledge in which discourses of risk, individual rights and autonomy are paramount. Drawing on an institutional ethnography, this chapter reflexively explores how Canadian activists concerned about HIV criminalisation have sought to intervene in those knowledge relations. I argue that ambiguities in legal notions of risk have been a central feature not only of the discursive organisation of criminal law regulation of HIV non-disclosure, but of activist efforts to intervene in that governance. I conceptualise those efforts as a form of science-based criminal law reform through which people living with HIV, lawyers, community workers and others have sought to intervene in the text-mediated relations of criminal law regulation by translating epidemiological risk knowledge for criminal justice settings. The chapter explores the writing practices and ethical dilemmas associated with such translation efforts. Through an analysis of the 2012 Supreme Court of Canada decision in *R v Mabior*, it also points to the successes, limitations, complexities and unintended consequences of mobilising scientific knowledge in HIV-related criminal law reform.

Mary Ellen Dunn has published a book with Lexington Press titled: *Reclaiming Opportunities for Effective Teaching: An Institutional Ethnographic Study of Community College Course Outlines*.

The book examines the increased standardization and management of community college course outlines in Ontario and the associated decline in the ability of college professors to effectively educate their students. Dunn tracks the changes of increased pressure from corporations to privatize public services and make them for-profit friendly. Interviews of program faculty who have recently been forced to use course outlines for the first time, along with critical analyses of a sample course outline and a series of union-related texts illuminate the issue. Dunn attributes the shift of power in community colleges to various factors which include: the ideological work college employees do to support global finance capital, the managerial labor which establishes a course outline, the textual duties that faculty members facilitate to set up their own ruling, and the performance work that faculty members do to execute the textual rules of their prescriptive course outline work. In order to rectify the harmful effects of the new standardized and supervised curriculum, Dunn identifies areas where effective teaching and learning can be reclaimed.

Dorothy Smith comments: Mary Dunn's institutional ethnography shows us how the managerial standardization of course outlines and curriculum in Ontario community colleges displaces the learning interests of both teachers and students. Reading her book is an education in itself.

Preparing for your IE Dissertation Defense

A couple of years ago, Cheryl Zurawski was planning her dissertation defense and worried, as we all did, what kinds of questions her committee would ask. As a result of her research, she prepared this list of likely questions prepared specifically for the IE researcher. These were posted on the Students of Institutional Ethnography Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/studentsofinstitutionalethnography/>) and Cheryl graciously agreed to have them reproduced here.

Topic/Problematic

What is your problematic?
Why did you choose that particular problematic?
What made you want to do research on this topic?

Literature Review

How did you isolate the topics you focused on in the literature review?
How did your literature review inform your analysis?
Can you clarify for me what you learned from the review of the literature?

Method

Did you use a conceptual framework to design your research and analyze your findings? If so, what does it comprise?
What are the alternatives to the approach or method you used?
Why did you choose to use those methods of data gathering?
What is the ontology of institutional ethnography?

What is the epistemology of institutional ethnography?
How is your study ethnographic?
How did you manage the data?
How did you store the data?
How did you make meaning of the data?
Are the techniques used for data analysis appropriate?
What specifically was your relationship to the context and informants of the study? Do you think that relationship in any way contaminated your study?
Do you think that taking up a particular standpoint introduced bias into your study?
What are the limitations in the research design?
What were the crucial research decisions you made?
How did you know it was time to stop data gathering and move on to data analysis? Did you reach saturation?
What methodological challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?

Findings

What did you find out?
In one sentence, what is your thesis?
Can you summarize your key findings?
How would you summarize your findings for an audience of nurses, administrators etc.
What is the key idea that binds your thesis together?
Summarize your key findings. What was the most interesting to you?
If you had five minutes to speak to a group of colleagues about the implications of your study, what would you say?
Explain what is new about your work?
Can you relate your findings to other important research in the field?
In what specific ways do you think you have made a contribution?
What is your original contribution to knowledge in your subject area?
What are the main achievements of your research?
Which of the achievements is most important to you and why?

Implications of Discoveries

How important are your findings – and to whom?
Whom do you think would be most interested in your work?
What is the significance of what you discovered?
What are the implications of your discoveries for HRD practice?
What does it all mean?
What is new or original about your work?
What sets your work apart from others?
Were you surprised by any of your results? If so, why and what was surprising?

Welcome to new members

Twelve new members have joined the IE Division since the publication of our last newsletter. Welcome all!

Cynthia Puddu
Isabel Sousa-Rodriguez
Tressie McMillan Cottom
Jeanette Pickett Pierce
Wan-Juo Cheng
Terry Williams

What impact do you think your research will have?
What is your most important suggestion and why?
Do you think your suggestions are feasible?
What is the main message of your dissertation that has not been said before?
How does your topic open something new and different as opposed to laying bare what is already known?
Were you objective or subjective in your role as a researcher?

Reflections on the Research

How has your view of your research topic changed during the course of the research?
What have you learned from your research experience?
What did you enjoy most about your work?
What are you most proud of and why?

Ethics

How important were ethical considerations in your study?
How did you handle the ethical considerations?

Study's Overall Quality

What have you done that merits a Master's degree?
What have you don that merits a PhD?

Field of Study

What published work is closest to what you have done? How is your work different?
How would you locate your research within the broader context of the nursing field?
Where is your thesis 'placed' in terms of the existing theory and debate in your discipline?
How are you going to disseminate your research?

Carley M. Geiss
Alicia R. Ingersoll
Yu Hsuan Lin
Alvin A. Camba
Brent Hutchison
Ember Skye Kanelee

**Sampling of Institutional Ethnography sessions at the SSSP 2016 Annual Meeting
August 19-21, Seattle, Washington**



Although the deadline for submitting abstracts has passed, we thought IEers would like this brief taste of some of the IE sessions planned for the Seattle meetings. A full list will be available in the Spring edition.

“Connecting the Dots” in institutional ethnographic research (Critical Dialogue)

Organizers: Janet Rankin, University of Calgary in Qatar, jmrankin@ucalgary.edu.qa and Lauren Eastwood, SUNY College at Plattsburg, lauren.eastwood@plattsburgh.edu

The Critical Dialogue “Connecting the Dots” has attracted papers that cross international boundaries. IE researchers contributing to this session will discuss how they bring the institution into view from sites of local/colloquial practice. The focus of the discussion is to facilitate the IE goal of empirically describing high levels of governance that link transformations in people’s work across sectors (such as governmental, nongovernmental, service and manufacturing sectors). Contributors include LaNysha Adams, Daniel Grace, Lauren Eastwood, Liza McCoy, Ela Nate, Manda Roddick and Dorothy Smith

Scholarship Grounded in the Community- Scholarship, Activism and Community Research (critical dialogue)

Organizer: Frank Ridzi, Lemoyne College, ridzifm@lemoyne.edu
Co-sponsored with Community research and development

This Critical Dialogue session is focused on Scholarship Grounded in the Community-Scholarship, Activism, and Community Research. It is co-sponsored by the Institutional Ethnography and Community Research and Development divisions and promises a robust discussion of the triumphs and travails experienced as SSSP members use their scholarly "muscles" to try to make a positive difference in their communities.

Law, Policy and Institutional Ethnography in Local and Global Contexts (Paper session co-sponsored with Law and Society Division)

Co-Organizers: Naomi Nichols, McGill University, naomi.nichols@mcgill.ca and Jay Borchert, University of Michigan, borjay@umich.edu

The papers in this session describe and analyze how the social organization of legal knowledge and practice arise through and give shape to relations among people. By bringing visibility to a diversity of textually-mediated social relations, these papers contest the ostensive neutrality and objectivity of legal processes, discourse, legislation and policy.

Wielding Wellness? The social organization of health and bodies (Paper session co-sponsored with Sport, Leisure and the Body Division)

Organizer: Matthew Strang, York University, matthew.strang@gmail.com

Achieving and exercising wellness is contingent on having certain abilities as well as possessing access to resources and supports in our broader social context. This session aims to elucidate the links between wellness and these factors, as they come into contact with our health and our bodies, in daily life. Increasingly, people in their everyday are doing more work towards, on and through their bodies and their health to achieve what is perceived to be wellness. How might that work converge, and diverge with (ruling) relations of racialization, sexualization, gender, ability, age and other factors? What empirical links exist between everyday life and its social organization around bodies, health and wellness? In addition to including papers that grapple with these questions, this session will include presentations that use Institutional Ethnography, as well as other frameworks, to understand and map out these relations. Papers can describe and reflect critically on specific empirical research projects, take a theoretical, methodological approach or adopt a more creative form

Institutional Junctures and their 21st Century Consequences (Paper session co-sponsored with Social Problems Theory Division)

Organizer: Marie Campbell, University of Victoria, mariecam@uvic.ca

This session offers the opportunity to look analytically at contemporary instances of what we are calling institutional junctures, particularly through research using institutional ethnography. Analytic attention to people's experiences of 21st century institutional practices can broaden our understanding of these changes. What institutional juncture claims your analytic attention and why? What is happening and through what specific mechanisms does it affect differently positioned institutional participants? How do institutional ethnographic findings help institutional participants understand, explain and take effective action? "What are the major contradictions being faced by change agents or that must be faced to organize positive change in such settings?"

Exploring Disability Using Institutional Ethnography (Paper session co-sponsored with Disability)

Organizer: Marj DeVault, Syracuse University mdevault@maxwell.syr.edu

This session, co-sponsored with the Disability Division, includes four IE studies that focus on the knowledge and work of professionals and parents as they manage pregnancies, care for infants, and educate young children in school. Each presentation helps to illuminate regimes of normalcy that shape the work of professionals and the ways that mothers engage those regimes. Marj DeVault will serve as discussant.

ONE-DAY WORKSHOP: Institutional Ethnography (limit 50):

Monday, August 22, 9:00am–4:30pm, Location: Westin Seattle Hotel

Registration Fee : \$110 for employed registrants or \$75 for unemployed/activist/student registrants

The Institutional Ethnography Division is hosting an interactive workshop for researchers who use or are interested in deepening their engagement with the alternative sociology, institutional ethnography (IE). This year the workshop will include an Opening Plenary presentation and discussion, focusing on “joining the dots” across well-developed institutional ethnographic studies of particular institutional contexts (for example, education, health, immigration and settlement, social services, or welfare provisioning). The Plenary discussion seeks to engage presenters and participants in considering how/where the various studies fit together. The Opening Plenary will be followed by two concurrent sessions. Session one is designed to build the foundational knowledge of people who are new to IE. Session two is an opportunity for more seasoned institutional ethnographers to discuss key issues and themes that arose over the conference. The last part of the day will be an opportunity for people to work in small groups to share and discuss institutional ethnographies in the proposal, analysis, and final writing stages. These seminar-style discussion groups will be composed of seasoned and novice institutional ethnographers to maximize learning.

