

# IE NEWSLETTER

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

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## *From the Division Chair* *Janet Rankin*

Planning for the IE Division sessions in New York in August 2013 is now moving forward in earnest as all the abstracts have been submitted and the organizers are reviewing the work and developing the sessions. This year we received a record number (43) submissions for the IE sessions. I am particularly excited about the conference this year because I have never been to New York!

The IE workshop being planned in conjunction with the SSSP annual meeting is also generating a great deal of interest and those people who volunteered last year to help with the organizing will be getting an email from me very soon to begin to hammer out the program in more detail. There is an inherent challenge in developing the workshop with so many IE'ers with such diverse needs. Our goal is to ensure that seasoned IE'ers have the opportunity to wrestle with complex ideas – such as the discussion that arose last year about whether one *needs* to take a 'standpoint'; whether it is *always* necessary to formulate problematics to guide analysis; and how Dorothy Smith's discussion about 'phantom texts' may actually play out in an empirical project. At the same time, it is important to support the many novices and students who come to the workshop for insight and guidance in how to formulate their topics for an IE project. Anyone with good ideas about what they would like to see included in the workshop programming, please don't hesitate to drop me an email.

It was with that ongoing sadness that, as the call for papers closed, we realized that Roxana Ng's name was still listed as the organizer of a co-sponsored session with the Global Division titled: *Institutional Ethnography Approaches to Gender, Race, Colonization and Migration in Transnational Contexts*. This is a topic that Roxana was passionate about. She had tried to get a global session onto the program in Denver in 2012 but there was no space.

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*(From the Division Chair continued)*

I had promised Roxana that I would do my best to negotiate a spot for her session in New York. Seeing her name listed beside this session in the call for papers reminded me of how much we are going to miss her and the stark loss we face with her death in January of this year. During our time together in New York I have requested a special time and a room where we can gather to remember Roxana. Other tributes to Roxana begin below.

-Janet

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## **Tributes to Roxana Ng (1951-2013)**

*The news that Roxana Ng passed away on January 12, 2013 was met with deep sadness. Tributes and remembrances quickly followed and spread via email, on Facebook and through listserv communiqués to members of various groups and organizations with which Roxana was affiliated. For this edition of the newsletter, members of the IE Division – among Roxana’s many, many colleagues, students and friends – share their reflections on her life, her work and times spent together.*



*Roxana chairing an IE session in Atlanta.*

## **Marie Campbell, University of Victoria (retired)**

I remember Roxana as a good friend. She was there and an important part of my own life-changing graduate student experiences. We were both making ourselves into the people we wanted to be. What we were leaving and where we thought we were headed may have been different. She was younger than I and she was dealing with being an immigrant. I learned how this was significant and often painful for her, personally. She had to stand her ground with her parents who expected a dutiful and more traditional daughter. But she, as I too, was intensively committed to being a feminist and a successful graduate student.

When we both moved to Toronto to enter OISE’s Department of Sociology in Education in the fall of 1978, we lived in the then affordable Annex area near the university. We often cooked meals together and talked and talked. Our conversations were stimulating, and really helpful to me – to us both, I guess. We plotted how to manage our deficiencies as new scholars – such as feeling intimidated to speak in public academic meetings. We knew that we needed to practice expressing our ideas, and pledged to say something at every event, even if it might make us look foolish. (People who know her will recognize how Roxana grew and flourished in this regard).

My graduate education had formal curriculum-based parts and informal parts, in which Roxana figured importantly. We shared our exploration of

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*(Tributes to Roxana continued)*

what we were being introduced to mainly by Dorothy but also by others – whose ideas had somehow to be accommodated into the mix. I remember with great pleasure those years and that work. It was such fun, too. Roxana passed on important insights into everything from cooking and how to tell a good Chinese restaurant from a plumped-up inferior one whose kitchen might not live up to exterior appearances. “Avoid Chinese restaurants with linen tablecloth and napkins,” she advised. She taught me how to cook rice properly (no salt) and how to cut vegetables Chinese style.

I will continue to remember Roxana as I last saw her – being at the top of her game, interacting with conference presenters at the Denver SSSP meetings in 2012. She looked great and presented as a confident, poised and well-spoken professional. What I found so appealing about Roxana there and everywhere I would see her was her enthusiasm combined with her generosity in responding to students about their work. We all know of her own commitments to community work and equity-oriented scholarship and activism. When she saw students taking up similarly focused work, she was always ready to pay careful attention to them.

**Marj DeVault, Syracuse University**

Our colleague Roxana Ng was full of life and passion – for her work, her friends, and for a full and balanced way of living. I was in Toronto just this past October, for a workshop at OISE’s Center for Women’s Studies in Education, where she was faculty head, and Roxana was, as always, a generous and gracious host for the workshop group. I remember too, many years ago, a visit to Toronto when she invited me to a party at her home, and I came to know of her elegant gardening and love for her dogs.

I have learned a great deal over the years from Roxana’s writing and from the distinctive lens she brought to institutional ethnography. I have returned many times to her short, classic monograph, *The Politics of Community Services:*

*Immigrant Women, Class and State*. There, she taught me to notice how service provision in community-based organizations is so often transformed into the work of the state, and how some women are produced as ‘immigrant women’ through specific and racialized practices of labor-market incorporation. The first idea is, of course, one that informs a great deal of institutional ethnographic scholarship; the second is a theme that, in my view, we are still learning to develop as fully as we might. Roxana’s approach rested firmly in the origins of institutional ethnography as a feminist sociology of knowledge; she insisted on keeping in mind the ideological character of racialization and the ways in which racial, ethnic and cultural categories are worked up through the documents of governance, whether at the level of the politics of community services or more broadly (as in her analysis of multiculturalism as ideology included in *Knowledge, Experience, and Ruling Relations*).

I have also been inspired by Roxana’s scholar-activist work with and for immigrant garment workers in Toronto and elsewhere. And I know that as a faculty member at OISE, she was an enormously important colleague and mentor for her students. She was a leader in many ways and was brave enough to open new ground, as in her recent explorations of what she called ‘embodied learning’ and its significance for equity in education. We will miss her spirited presence at our SSSP gatherings, but I know that we will continue to learn from her writings for many years to come.

**Nancy Jackson, OISE (retired)**

I knew Roxana from the time we were masters’ students together at the University of British Columbia in the mid 1970’s. When I think of her, the word ‘lively’ springs to mind. She was always animated, with such an articulate and assertive manner, distinctive even from her early days as a graduate student. She had an independent vision for her scholarship, often ‘sticking her neck out’ to try

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*(Tributes to Roxana continued)*

something new. At the same time, she was committed to activism and tireless in her social justice advocacy in a variety of community settings. Perhaps most distinctively, I remember and admire Roxana's passionate commitment to understanding the unity of body and mind in the pursuit of health. In this endeavour, I believe she was ahead of her time. It is such an obvious and tragic irony that she was snatched away so suddenly by a disease she had been so vigilant about for so long. Human life is ever fragile.

**Hongxia Shan, University of British Columbia**

Roxana was a feminist scholar, a community activist, and an adult educator. She was also known as an avid teacher as well as an adept practitioner of institutional ethnography. For a number of times, she stepped in to rescue her students from troubles caused by a lack of institutional literacy, and she always made use of those critical moments to teach how institutional ethnographic inquiry can be useful in practice. As an academic supervisor, Roxana was never thrifty with her scholarly insights, critiques or criticisms, but she challenged her students to the best of their potentials. As a person, Roxana was candid, warm, caring and close to many of her students. She was also a dog and cat lover, and she grew salads in her garden, which she generously shared with many. Roxana was and will remain an inspiration for many years to come!

**Bonnie Slade, University of Glasgow**

I deeply respected Roxana Ng's commitment to social justice, sense of humour and intellect. She undertook academic work that made a difference in the lives of marginalized people, drawing on institutional ethnography's sharp analytic lens to detail how marginalization is accomplished and how to challenge it. As a graduate student at OISE I was fortunate to work closely with Roxana. I took her doctoral level course on IE, worked with her on the SSHRC-funded 'Skilled In/Vulnerability' research project on which she was co-principal

investigator with Kiran Mirchandani, and benefited from her sharp intellect on my PhD thesis. Working with Roxana was never boring! I learned much from talking to her. I learned also from her writings, which are beautifully crafted and express complex ideas clearly. Her book, *The Politics of Community Services: Immigrant Women, Class and State* continues to offer analytic insight 25 years after publication. As a member of the international IE network in 2004 she hosted the 'Celebrating a Legacy: A Teach-In on Institutional Ethnography', bringing over 100 institutional ethnographers to OISE. Roxana Ng's work on adult education and transnational migration both demonstrate the power and potential of institutional ethnography, and will serve as a lasting educational resource. She will be sorely missed.



*Roxana speaking during a tribute to Dorothy in Atlanta.*

*(Tributes to Roxana continued)*

### **Frank Wang, National Chengchi University**

When Roxana visited Taiwan in 2005, she asked me to put her Chinese name on the program. Therefore, I have the privilege of knowing Roxana's Chinese name, which means 'a child of the dawn'. That is exactly how I felt about Roxana. Wherever she was, Roxana brought energy and light to people. She was small but had a big heart for others.

I never studied with Roxana during my doctoral studies at the University of Toronto from 1994-1998, but she played a key role in my thesis. Her benchmarking book, the *Politics of Community Services: Immigrant Women, Class and State* provided a great case study of institutional ethnographic analysis when I was struggling to grasp this mode of inquiry for my doctoral thesis. This book is still my favorite reading when I teach institutional ethnography in Taiwan. The news of Roxana's passing came just a few days after a Taiwanese publisher agreed to publish her book in Chinese. I intended to write her about this good news, but the bad news came first.

Like the first beam of dawn, Roxana brought warmth to others. She served as the internal examiner for my PhD thesis defense. After a critical review from the external examiner, Roxana started her comments by saying 'this is one of the best theses I've ever read' to comfort and support me. I can still feel the warmth of that critical moment.

Even after ten years, when I returned to the University of Toronto as a visiting professor for my short-term leave in 2008, Roxana was kind enough to invite me to spend Christmas Eve with her and her friends. She knew how difficult it was for a person to spend the holiday alone. I remember she drove to pick up a senior retired faculty member who lived by herself to spend the night together. I was not the only one to be cared for by her that special night.

There are so many sweet memories of Roxana in my mind that she will not fade away. Whenever I think of her, the sun will rise to warm my heart. Rest in peace, my dear Roxana.

## **Nominations still open for Dorothy E. Smith Award**

The IE Division is pleased to solicit nominations for the 2013 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 which have drawn upon or contributed to IE scholarship. The award committee invites members of the IE Division to send a one-page statement describing the contributions of the nominee to Suzanne Vaughan at [svaughan@asu.edu](mailto:svaughan@asu.edu) by May 1, 2013.

### **"A cool use of IE thinking"**

-by Jean Eells

I have a tiny bit I will offer for the newsletter – it's not strictly IE but it was a cool use of IE thinking.

I facilitated a strategic planning session for board members of a non-profit group which provides, among other things, capacity building for front line practitioners/educators who do environmental education. One of the elements they had not been thinking about was the reality of the practitioners who are new to the education

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*("A cool use of IE thinking" continued)*

settings where they teach – both formal and non-formal settings. I quickly created an IE-based activity to help them ‘see’ the process a teacher in the K-12 system in the United States has to go through to plan and hold a field experience for their students.

There was one classroom teacher and one naturalist educator among the board members so they each led a small group to map out the exact steps they have to go through to create the outdoor learning opportunity. We used sticky notes and a long piece of roll paper and they wrote each step and moved the notes until they showed the astonishing number of steps it took to create one outdoor experience from the standpoints of the practitioners. To further emphasize the challenges a new teacher or naturalist might face in learning how to hold outdoor events, I asked them to distinguish between tasks where they needed to ask someone face-to-face (meaning needed to schedule an appointment such as with an administrator), or required a phone call during normal business hours (not convenient for teachers to accomplish), or could be done with an e-mail. The net result was the board saw opportunities for the non-profit to provide specific types of support to new practitioners by creating checklists and more.

I don't yet know if they will be able to act on their insights, but it was certainly a powerful visual to help this group focus on one aspect of the lives of their target audience members. It would not be a difficult step to examine the list to see the ruling relations if the group was interested in working at that level. It would also be useful to help practitioners strategically thank the helpers in the chain of steps – seeing that bus drivers, food service, and special assistant teachers receive letters from the children about what a fun learning experience they had – people who are critical to the ruling relations and dynamics of successful environmental education.

## **Developing IE in the Chinese world**

-by Frank Wang with Marj DeVault

IE is now moving into the everyday lives of the Chinese-speaking population. More than 300 Taiwanese scholars, graduate students and practitioners participated in an IE conference led by Dorothy Smith, Marie Campbell and Marj DeVault in Taiwan November 22-23, 2012. This is the second time that Dorothy visited Taiwan (her first visit was in 2004). Since her first visit, the application of IE in the Taiwanese context has flourished. This was the first big conference in Taiwan at which both major IE scholars and local Taiwanese scholars came together to share their experiences of engaging with IE. The conference was organized by Dorothy's student, Frank Wang of Chengchi University. and Marj's student, Li-Fang Liang of Yang Ming University.

Two IE books have been translated into Chinese: Griffith and Smith's book *Mothering for Schooling* was translated into Chinese in 2007, while Campbell and Gregor's book *Mapping Social Relations: A Primer in Doing Institutional Ethnography* was translated in 2012. Many participants brought these books for Dorothy and Marie to sign during breaks.

On the first day of the conference, Dorothy, Marie and Marj shared their personal stories as feminist scholars encountering IE. Marie opened the second day of the conference with a presentation titled '*Recognizing our place in the everyday world: The social organization of one's experience as a basis for doing institutional ethnography*'. Marj focused on ways of conducting IE research in her presentation on '*Fieldwork and data analysis in institutional ethnography*'. Dorothy illustrated how to analyze texts in institutional ethnography in her presentation on '*Texts in action*'.

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*(Developing IE in the Chinese world continued)*

Three IE cases were presented at the end of the conference. Zheng-Fen Chen explored the experiences of migrant care workers in nursing homes; Yu-Hsuan Lin focused on the lives of academics under the point system and Chen-Shuo Hong studied the invisible care in day care centers for older people. The cases show how the dialogue between institutional ethnography and the local struggles of marginalized groups in Taiwan has begun. Overcoming the language and cultural barriers, IE ceases to be an academic jargon in the textbook but a way of rethinking our daily lives. Having the three IE scholars in the same room offers a rich combination of ways of interpreting IE, which proved to be very engaging for conference participants of different backgrounds. One of them said: “I used to think IE is difficult to understand, but I found it very feasible and interesting now”.

The recent conference in Taiwan marks an important advancement of IE into the Chinese-speaking world where 15 per cent of the population uses the language in their daily lives and English is spoken by under 5 per cent of the population.



*Marj DeVault, Dorothy Smith and Marie Campbell with Taiwanese scholars at the end of the conference.*

**Additional comment from Marj DeVault:**

It was very wonderful to meet so many Taiwanese scholars who are interested in feminist scholarship and IE. I was especially interested in the presentations by Taiwanese scholars who have adopted IE as a way of exploring the organization of carework and new accountability circuits in higher education. The details are different, of course, but their analyses certainly resonate with the concerns of my students in the United States. It's clear that we have much to learn from each other. I applaud the conference organizers, Frank Wang and Li-Fang Liang (and their indefatigable team of graduate student assistants!), for their thoughtful organization of the conference. By organizing a first day of more personal talks, they provided an opportunity for us to get to know one another. And by providing simultaneous translation for participants who wanted it (and for us!), they helped us discuss together. I look forward to new IE studies from Taiwan and the larger Chinese-speaking world.

## Weekend and weeklong intensive on IE

Dorothy Smith and Susan Turner have recently confirmed Friday, June 14 (starting in the evening) through Sunday, June 16 for a weekend workshop on IE. The weekend workshop will be followed immediately by a week-long intensive session (June 17-21). Both events will be held at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto and are sponsored by the Centre for Women's Studies in Education (CWSE).

Those interested in registration are encouraged to watch the CWSE website <http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/cwse/> or send an email to Jamie Ryckman at [cwse@utoronto.ca](mailto:cwse@utoronto.ca)

Please Note: The workshop and intensive session confirmed for June will likely be repeated either immediately or with a one week gap. Confirmed dates for the second set of events are to be announced. If you would like to be put on the mailing list for more information, please email Jamie Ryckman at [cwse@utoronto.ca](mailto:cwse@utoronto.ca)

## Call for sessions: ISA Thematic Group on Institutional Ethnography

The Thematic Group on Institutional Ethnography is inviting submissions for sessions at the next World Congress of Sociology in Yokohama, Japan from July 13-19, 2014. The Congress is being organized by the International Sociological Association (ISA) with the following theme: *Facing an Unequal World: Challenges of Global Sociology*.

The Thematic Group on Institutional Ethnography has been allocated ten sessions, including its business meeting. Session proposals must be sent to the program coordinator, Paul Luken ([pluken@bellsouth.net](mailto:pluken@bellsouth.net)) by **March 15, 2013**.

Sessions are 110 minutes in length and members of the Thematic Group are encouraged to develop a

variety of stimulating sessions, including some special sessions that address the issues of global inequality. Submissions should include the following information:

1. Title of the session
2. Session format
  - Regular session: five papers and 20 minutes for discussion.
  - Joint session: with another identified research committee, working group or thematic group.
  - Featured or keynote speaker: 60 minute presentation followed by discussion.
  - Author meets their critics: author(s) and commentators discuss a recent publication.
  - Other types of sessions such as workshops or sessions on pedagogy.
3. A 200-word description of the session.
4. Language(s) of the session (English, French, Spanish).
5. Full name, affiliation and email of the session organizer(s) and/or session chair(s) if different.

## IE Facebook group

In November 2012, Helen Brown of the University of Alberta created an informal Facebook group called *Students of Institutional Ethnography*. The group has since grown to 50 members and more are welcomed. While intended as a networking group for students, Helen notes it is really "for anyone interested in IE, but particularly for those who may feel isolated in their studies."

To join the Facebook group, please go to: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/studentsofinstitutionalethnography/>

## Spreading the word about an IE project in development

-by Marie Campbell and Cheryl Zurawski

'Knowledge mobilization' – various activities of getting research findings used in the real world – is all the rage these days.

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*(Spreading the word continued)*

Funding agencies the world over are upping their expectations that proposals submitted to them include explicit plans about knowledge mobilization.

Coincidentally, among some within the IE community, there is healthy debate about taking action on our findings. We get a glimpse through the research we do of how things might work better if only we communicated our findings to people who would make good use of them. This is the promise of IE, but often, the kind of knowledge mobilization that would get our research findings used in the real world can seem just too difficult to contemplate.

Marie Campbell and Cheryl Zurawski are working up a project that begins to respond to these issues in an organized and collaborative way. Although very much contingent on receiving funding, we want to communicate some information of particular interest to anyone planning to attend the 2013 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Victoria in June. The proposal is to create a highly interactive website as the electronic platform for dialogue between members of a web-based community of institutional ethnographers and people who visit the site. The preparatory activities begin at Congress as part of a roundtable that Marie Campbell has organized (tentatively scheduled for June 8) that will go ahead whether or not funding is provided to the larger project of which it is a part. The purpose of the roundtable is to provide institutional ethnographers with a forum for sharing their experiences of giving post-analysis feedback to people at various levels in the organizations they have studied. Please plan to come to the roundtable.

The day after the roundtable (June 9), the first official project meeting is planned (again, subject to funding). At the project meeting, the website that we propose to build for the purposes of enabling and supporting the mobilization of institutional ethnographic research knowledge will be unveiled and people who are interested in becoming

members of the web-based community will meet to begin to work out what comes next.

Marie and Cheryl would like to compile an email distribution list for any IE Division members who wish to be kept up-to-date on this project in development. To get on the list, please send an email to Marie Campbell ([mariecam@uvic.ca](mailto:mariecam@uvic.ca)) or Cheryl Zurawski ([cdz@arialassociates.com](mailto:cdz@arialassociates.com)).

## Member news and notes

**Laura Bisailon** received two awards for her doctoral dissertation titled *Cordon Sanitaire or Healthy Policy? How Prospective Immigrants with HIV are Organized by Canada's Mandatory HIV Screening Policy*. These were the Governor General's Gold Medal in the Humanities awarded to the most outstanding doctoral dissertation in the humanities and the Joseph De Koninck Doctoral Prize awarded to recognize a major contribution to knowledge in an interdisciplinary studies program.

**Laurie Clune** shares the news that she was a Top Finalist for the 2012 Centre for Critical Qualitative Health Research Award for Methodological Excellence in a Qualitative Doctoral Dissertation. The title of Laurie's dissertation is *When the Injured Nurse Returns to Work: An Institutional Ethnography*.

## New publications

**Laura Bisailon** sends citations for two new publications.

Bisailon, L., & Rankin, J. (2013). Navigating the politics of fieldwork using institutional ethnography: Strategies for practice. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 14(1), Art.14.  
<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1829>

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(New publications continued)

Bisaillon, L. (2012). An analytic glossary to social inquiry using institutional and political activist ethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 11(5), 607-627.

<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/article/view/17779>

**Peter and Kamini Grahame** are pleased to announce that their encyclopedia entry on institutional ethnography is available at the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology Online*: <http://www.sociologyencyclopedia.com/public/>.

This is a 2000-word entry that provides a basic account of IE, including its origins, growth, distinctive emphases, research directions, and differences from other forms of ethnography.

Access to the article requires an active subscription to the online version of the encyclopedia.

Navigating the encyclopedia site is a little tricky and its index is not fully updated. The best way to find the entry is to type institutional ethnography into the encyclopedia's search window (upper right corner). The actual publication date of the entry was 2012. Members of the IE Division who do not have access to a participating library may contact the authors for additional information.

## Call for media reviews: *Humanity & Society*

*Humanity & Society*, the journal of the Association for Humanist Sociology, announces the introduction of media reviews. The journal invites reviewers of sociological messages in photography, web-based art, websites, popular films and documentaries, radio broadcasts, and multimedia presentations. Also invited are suggestions for media reviews.

As a generalist journal, *Humanity & Society* publishes media reviews on a wide variety of topics. Editors of the journal are particularly interested in media presentations that are relevant to humanist sociology. Humanist sociology is broadly defined as a sociology that views people not only as products of social forces but also as agents in their lives and the world.

The journal welcomes reviewers from diverse backgrounds and with diverse perspectives. To review for *Humanity & Society*, or to offer suggestions for reviews, please contact Pamela Anne Quiroz ([paquiroz@uic.edu](mailto:paquiroz@uic.edu)) with a brief summary of your chosen review.

## Welcome to new members

The following people have joined the IE Division since our last newsletter. Welcome all!

Sivan Bomze  
Randol Contreras  
Max Greenberg  
Norah Hosken

Orla Kelly  
Laura Martin  
Katie McIntyre Reece  
Jeremiah Morelock

Katrina Quisumbing King  
Gabrielle Raley  
Callie Watkins Liu