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IE Newsletter

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

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From the Division Chair: LaNysha Adams

Hi Fellow Institutional Ethnographers or IE-ers!

The best adjective to describe how I feel as your current IE-Division Chair is **EXUBERANT**. I want to thank you all for your vote to do important work for our division during what is such a critical time around the world. SSSP's annual conference theme for next year is, "Bringing the Hope Back In: Sociological Imagination and Dreaming Transformation." In our business meeting this year, we had a fruitful conversation about where the hope went and what it would be brought back INTO. While no definitive conclusions were reached at our business meeting, I do think that there is much to be discussed about this point of hope and transformation.

As an independent scholar that's been doing community organizing/social justice work for over 15 years, there's no other approach that marries research with an explication of how we might bring about transformative social change from the standpoint of people who are typically the subjects of change(s) needing to occur on the frontline. It seems as though we are always facing crises and pivotal junctures that indicate a need for significant social change. Personally, I think the times of now are different than before because of the rapid rise of rightwing populism worldwide. I believe that Institutional Ethnography is inherently hopeful and has much to offer scholars from many disciplines beyond sociology.

In 2020, the independent-IE and co-sponsored sessions will no doubt be dynamic. SSSP has 23 divisions and I am happy to report that we are partnering with nearly one-third of them. This provides an opportunity to expand our IE-network and I am eager to connect with as many of you as possible for innovative ideas you may have about additional ways we might expand our network.

I hope the rest of 2019 is productive in ways that rejuvenate your spirit and passion for the work in which each of you engage.

Onward and upward,
LaNysha

Dorothy Smith Named to Order of Canada



Institutional Ethnography founder, Professor Emerita in the Department of Social Justice Education at OISE, Dorothy E. Smith, was named to the Order of Canada in June, 2019. Announced by Governor-General Julie Payette, the award is one of Canada's highest civilian honors. Congratulations to Dorothy Smith on this well-deserved honor.

Remembering New York

George W. Smith Student Paper Award Winner



This year's winner of the 2019 George W. Smith Student Paper Award is: Sarah Lewington of McGill University. The title of her paper is: "Institutional Ethnography and Critical Race Feminism: Unlocking Institutional Policy," McGill University

Congratulations Sarah!

Paper Abstract: Despite the diverse initiatives and educational efforts put forth by North American colleges and universities, the rate of sexual assault has not been reduced over the last five decades. Given that nearly 25% of female undergraduate students in the U.S and Canada experience rape or sexual assault, sexual violence on campus remains a pressing issue. My research reveals some of the ways women's safety is impacted by higher education institutional policy. Utilizing a range of qualitative research methods, I conducted an institutional ethnography of a university's response (e.g. policy, email, etc.) to gender-based violence, illuminating how particular university policies influence the safety and unsafety of women at McGill University. Specifically, I use Sara Ahmed's (2007) inquiry into diversity documents to highlight the distinction between 'good' documents and documents that enable good practice. Drawing on seven in depth, open-ended interviews with women graduate students at McGill, the present work utilizes critical race feminism to tease out the ways in which institutional policy and practice (re)produce inequity with respect to race, gender and class. Grounded in Shuri's experience as one of the few people of color (and one of the few women) in her faculty, I engage with Malinda Smith's (2010) scholarship to trace how the institution is implicated in the making of racialized, gendered, and classed individuals. Kyung Ah's own story builds on that of Shuri's, lending insight into the disproportionate barriers to reporting she experienced as a Korean woman and international student, ultimately preventing her from reporting. This paper not only demonstrates how institutional ethnography and critical race feminism enrich one another, but also how the combination of these sociological approaches and frameworks reveal the ways in which institutional policy can operate as a stand in for actual change.

Dorothy E. Smith Award for Scholar-Activism Winner

This year's winner of the 2019 Dorothy E. Smith Award for Scholar-Activism is Praxis International. Praxis International is a non-profit corporation that works to end violence in the

lives of women and children. The corporation was founded by the late **Ellen Pence**, former IE Division Member. Former Division Member Chair, **Naomi Nichols**, nominated Praxis for the award. She said in her nominating letter:

“Praxis does the work that scholar activists in the academy like me would love to do, but which feels structurally impossible. I have collaborated with Praxis myself on more than one occasion and always walk away feeling intellectual transformed – they have carved out a fruitful balance between critical intellectual engagement, institutional collaboration and reform.”

Congratulations Praxis International!

For more information please consult the Praxis International Website at:

<https://praxisinternational.org>

Call for IE Division Awards

George W. Smith Graduate Student Paper Competition

Deadline January 31, 2020

The [Institutional Ethnography Division](#) solicits papers for its 2020 George W. Smith Graduate Student Paper Competition. To be considered, papers should advance institutional ethnography scholarship either methodologically or through a substantive contribution. For an overview of institutional ethnography and the purposes of the IE Division, see <https://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/pageid/1236/m/464>. Authors must be currently enrolled graduate students or have graduated within the last 12 months. Submissions are to be 25 pages long or less, excluding notes, references and tables, and be submitted in Word-compatible format, in 12-point Times New Roman font. An electronic letter from the student’s supervisor attesting to the lead author’s student status must accompany the submission. The recipient will receive a monetary prize of \$100, a plaque of recognition, student membership, conference registration, and an opportunity to present the winning paper at the 2020 SSSP meetings. The winner of the 2020 paper will be invited to sit on the adjudicating panel for the 2021 paper submissions. Please note that any paper submitted for consideration for the George W. Smith Graduate Student Paper Award must also be submitted through the SSSP [Call for Papers](#) to be presented at the 2020 meeting of the SSSP. Send submission to review committee chair and IE division chair:

Megan Welsh (Committee Chair) mwelsh@sdsu.edu

LaNysha Adams (IE Division Chair) lanysha@edlinguist.com .

Please be aware that a paper submission may only be submitted to one division.

Dorothy E. Smith Award for Scholar Activism

Deadline: March 31, 2020

The [Institutional Ethnography Division](#) is pleased to solicit nominations for the 2020 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 by March 31, 2020, a one-page statement of the nominee to:

Frank Ridzi at frankridzi@gmail.com ,

Naomi Nichols at naomi.nichols@mcgill.ca

Jayne Malenfant jayne.malenfant@mail.mcgill.ca

Members' News and Notes

Freedden Blume Oeur, published a book in 2018 titled *Black Boys Apart: Racial Uplift and Respectability in All-Male Public Schools*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

While single-sex public schools face much criticism, many Black communities see in them a great promise: that they can remedy a crisis for their young men. *Black Boys Apart* reveals triumph, hope, and heartbreak at two all-male schools, a public high school and a charter high school, drawing on Freedden Blume Oeur's ethnographic work. While the two schools have distinctive histories and ultimately charted different paths, they were both shaped by the convergence of neoliberal ideologies and a politics of Black respectability. As Blume Oeur reveals, all-boys education is less a school reform initiative and instead joins a legacy of efforts to reform Black manhood during periods of stark racial inequality. *Black Boys Apart* shows all-boys schools to be an odd mix of democratic empowerment and market imperatives, racial segregation and intentional sex separation, strict discipline and loving care. Challenging narratives that endorse these schools for nurturing individual resilience in young Black men, this perceptive and penetrating ethnography argues for a holistic approach in which Black communities and their allies promote a collective resilience. For more information, please visit the book's website: <http://blackboysapart.com>.

Naomi Nichols new book *Youth, School and Community: Participatory Institutional Ethnography*, was published by the University of Toronto Press in 2019.

Unlike other books about youth, this book examines how young people's experiences of inclusion and exclusion are shaped by extended social relations, coordinating thought and conduct across time and space. Working with young people, using a range of participatory institutional ethnographic strategies, this book investigates the social and institutional relations which differentially punctuate our lives. While research began with what young people know and have experienced, this starting place anchors an investigation of public sector institutions and institutional processes that remain implicated in social-historical-economic processes of global capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism.

Morena Tartari is in the second year of her MSCA research fellowship funded by the European Commission on the agency of lone mothers in four EU countries. She uses an IE approach. Here is an abstract of her work, a piece of which she hopes to present at SSSP in San Francisco.

There is little knowledge on the social relations and practices that contribute – or do not contribute – to protecting and socially including lone mothers, beginning from the crucial transition to lone parenthood: the judicial evaluation.

Focusing on the transition from double parenthood to lone motherhood and, in particular, on the period of judicial evaluation for child custody and judicial decisions for children/family allowances and divorce/separation, this project aims to investigate some specific aspects of the socio-cultural construction of an active gender citizenship by future lone mothers.

The interest is in lone mothers' everyday strategies and social practices to claim inclusion and to negotiate (or not negotiate) the dominant definition of family and parenthood proposed by institutions and professionals, and the less legitimated and multiple situated definitions of lone parents and their families.

Introducing the everyday dimension into the study of gender citizenship has the purpose of exploring the lone mothers' manifest and hidden 'work' of legitimation and of possible de-legitimation by institutions.

Adopting the sociological approach of Institutional Ethnography (IE) as a method, this study is collecting data in different EU countries (Belgium, Italy, Spain and the UK), with discursive interviews to lone mothers, professionals and gender issues activists, participant observations, and photo-voice sessions.

This action will be hosted by the University of Antwerp (Belgium), with a secondment phase at the School of Social and Political Science of the University of Edinburgh (UK), visits at the Institute of Women's and Gender Studies of the University of Granada (Spain), at the Institutional Ethnography Nordic Network at Agder University (Norway), and at the 'Centro di Ateneo 'Elena Cornaro' on gender knowledge, cultures and policies' of the University of Padua (Italy).

Jake Muller published a book in 2019 titled *Educating Numbers: The Social Organization of Supervised Support Staff Work at a Community College*. Middletown, DE: Beachview Creations.

This book presents ethnographic research that reveals how everyday ruling is carried out in a small community college through the use of student numbers or enrollments. The research focuses on selected support staff employees that shows how they do their work, despite impediments from some of their managers, that creates the student numbers and their use in this institution. Each employee's work, with First Nations and other students, is part of an organized series of related steps or an educational circuit mediated through the use of texts, documents and reports. These employees create the student numbers in programs and courses mostly by entering student information into the institutions database network. A concurrent institutional circuit is undertaken by the work of an employee who works only with these student numbers as data. This second circuit consists of distributing that student data, such as full-time equivalent (FTE) students, weekly within the institution, and annually to management for their report to the provincial government ministry of advanced education and skills training. The research advances that these two related education circuits, that are mediated by texts, are part of how the ruling of this institution is organized and carried out.

Majorie DeVault published an article in a collection of essays on research methods for studying social problems, edited by Amir Marvasti and Javier Trevino. The citation is:

Marjorie L. DeVault, "Institutional Ethnography: A Mode of Inquiry and a Strategy for Change." Pp. 83-101 in *Researching Social Problems*, ed. Amir Marvasti and A Javier Trevino. New York: Routledge, 2020.

The editorial introduction to the book provides a nice discussion of the sociological history of the "social problems" frame, and a bit about the role of SSSP, which may be of interest to IE Division members, perhaps especially those from outside of sociology who aren't familiar with that history.

Majorie DeVault, along with Lindsay Prior, Kevin Walby & Gayle Letherby, reviewed a 2018 book by Liz Stanley, titled *Dorothy E. Smith: Feminist Sociology and Institutional Ethnography* (Edinburgh: X Press). The reviews appeared in the *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 2018, Vol. 21, #6, pp. 761-768.



In Memoriam: A Tribute to Alison Griffith by Naomi Nichols

I never set out to become a professor. I went to graduate school to do an M.Ed. because I didn't want to grow up. I'd been teaching overseas, and I knew I wanted to come back to Canada, but I didn't want to get caught up in climbing a school board salary grid like many of my friends who were teachers in Ontario were doing at the time. So, I went to graduate school. And I only applied to one school (York University) because the idea of an academic track or an academic life had not occurred to me, and I liked that one didn't have to choose a department at York. My first semester, I took a class with Alison, and as a consequence, I painstakingly read *Writing the Social* for the first time. I remember coming to her office – something I'd never done as an undergraduate student – with the book and a bunch of drawings and ideas on loose-leaf paper to see if she could help coalesce my sense-making. My undergraduate degree was in English Literature and Biology, so none of the words Dorothy Smith was using nor the people she was citing were familiar to me. But there was something about what she was saying that spoke to me – and engaged me. I just couldn't organize my thoughts enough to figure out what it was, and I wanted to ask for Alison's help.

Looking back on my 25-year-old self, I expect I must have come across as so earnest and pathetic that Alison felt she had to take me on as a student. I had not been assigned to work with her during the admissions process, but I was desperate to be taken into her fold. She represented a whole world that I didn't know existed. That fall, she invited our class (if my memory serves) to an event on learning to do institutional ethnography organized at the University of Toronto, where I was able to listen to Dorothy herself, Ellen Pence, Didi Khayatt, Roxanna Ng and other IE-folks talk about Dorothy's influence on their research. My favourite memories are of being in groups of IE scholars (most of whom are now retired) and listening to them talk about their days as Dorothy's students – the parties they would have and their experiences figuring out how to do this sociology Dorothy had conceptualized. Alison invited me to things. She'd say things like, "let's put this lunch on the project," and make me feel like I was part of a world of ideas over lunch or drinks that I hadn't previously known existed. She made me feel included, and she treated me like my ideas had value. She also offered incisive critiques on numerous occasions when I'd gotten something wrong or started in the wrong place or sent her something that was poorly organized and not yet ready for her to look at.

So, when I received a scholarship in my first year of graduate school, I decided maybe I'd just stick around and apply to do a Ph.D. Again, because I didn't know there was such a thing as an academic track nor that there was any savvy one should be exercising about where one goes to graduate school or whether or not to continue working with the same supervisor, I didn't apply anywhere else. I only applied to York, so I could keep working with Alison. Because it wasn't just graduate school I enjoyed, I liked being in Alison's world. And I'm so glad that I did this. Because I received exceptional supervision from 2004 until 2019, when – after a visit with her and Harvey in May – Alison insisted that perhaps now I could refer to her as a colleague. This last visit was very impactful for me because a) I knew she was going to die soon; and b) her mentorship and guidance were soul-salve for me at a time when I really needed this. I hadn't realized how close to the edge of my own capacity to handle my life I was until I had her caring insights and advice to draw from again. I think it may be the case that once you are someone's supervisor, you are always their supervisor, even if you are both grown women and many years have passed. And even if one of you insists that the other refer to you as a colleague now.

Indeed, it is now that I have my own cadre of doctoral and MA supervisees that I recognize how lucky I was as a student (and how lucky my own students are as a consequence of Alison's exceptional generosity with me). My ethics as a scholar are Alison's ethics. She taught me how to be an academic, and I am so glad that she did. I am regularly shown how unique she was in an academic world that rewards self-interest and self-promotion, and thus how lucky I have been to have been mentored by someone who sought to foster a different type of academic culture.

When I said goodbye to Alison, it was a busy Labour Day Monday afternoon, and I was on the front porch with my children. The call caught me off-guard and then – as is the case in a family full of people who largely just see you as a caregiver – I was quickly drawn away from my grief and back into the ordinary activities of preparing dinner and lunches, drawing baths and organizing supplies for the first day of school. Since that day on the porch when I cried into the phone, I haven't taken enough time to let the magnitude of her influence on me nor her recent death sink in. I'm grateful to have had a chance to take some time to do this today.

IE Foundations and Mapping Workshop

A 2-Day Intensive Training in Institutional Ethnography with Dorothy Smith and Susan Turner

December 2 & 3, 2019, 9:30 am-6:00 pm \$650 CDN HST Included

LOCATION: Leadership, Higher & Adult Education, OISE/UT, Toronto

This intensive training in IE will be useful for those who teach or want to teach IE *and* for those who are just beginning to work with IE or who want a refresher.

The 2-days provide an intensive foundational training in IE fundamentals and practice, including how to put the fundamentals to work in grounded, focused exploration. The extraordinary power of IE graphical mapping as a way to *do and to teach* institutional ethnography, has not been widely seen or well understood. This 2-day intensive event offers a foundation in IE thinking and discussion and in IE graphical mapping as a tool to develop a project, explore institutional work, texts and language, track institutional processes, and present complex results.

The Smith-Turner conversation and collaboration in developing IE began in 1987 at OISE/UT. For the last decade we've designed and offered IE Workshops and IE Intensive Working Weeks here. We've learned that: 1) Moving from discipline-based conventional research thinking to doing IE inquiry requires building on the essential fundamentals offered in this workshop. 2) A working knowledge of these essentials provides a firm foundation that keeps your exploring rigorous while keeping it fluid and open to learning and discovery.

December 2 and 3, Dorothy and Susan will explicate the essential foundations of IE and engage participants in putting fundamentals to work in interactive demonstration. Demonstrations will use individual participants' projects and beginning explorations.

To join us, or inquire, please contact Susan at turnersusanm@gmail.com.

Please register early to secure a spot.

Payment is by e-transfer to Susan by November 22nd.

Recent IE Papers Published

A regular feature of the Fall *IE Newsletter* is to compile a sampling of recent publications involving IE for our members. If you know of any papers, articles or books that you would like to see posted here in future issues, please contact Gina Petonito at petonig@miamioh.edu.

Doll, Agnieszka and Kevin Walby, (2019) "Institutional ethnography as a method of inquiry for criminal justice and socio-legal studies," *International Journal for Crime, Justice & Social Democracy*, 8: 147-160.

Drexler, Olivia, (2018) "Disability and queerness: exploration of disability and sexuality in autoethnography and institutional ethnography," *Michigan Sociological Review*, 32: 133-147.

Sorce, Giuliana, (2019) "Weaving into the mediascape: An institutional ethnography of NGO media activism in South Africa," *Global Media Journal: German Edition*, 9: 1-28.

Winton, Sue, (2019) "Coordinating Policy Layers of School Fundraising in Toronto, Ontario, Canada: An Institutional Ethnography," *Educational Policy*, 33: 44-66.

Welcome New Members

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

Michelle Hewitt
Eleni Kariki
Julie Tulley
Stephen Yu
Stephanie Zubriski

Call for Papers

Below are the IE sponsored or co-sponsored sessions calling for papers for the 2020 SSSP Meetings in San Francisco. All papers must be submitted by midnight, January 31, 2020 to be considered for inclusion in the program. To submit, please consult:

<https://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/755/fuseaction/ssspsession2.publicView>



Session 7: CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Using Institutional Ethnography as a Tool for Community Change-THEMATIC

Co-sponsors: Community Research and Development; Institutional Ethnography

Co-Organizers: Frank M. Ridzi, [frankridzi@gmail.com] and Cynthia Puddu, [pudduc@macewan.ca]

Session 32: Disability and Media: Inclusion, Access, and Representation
Co-sponsors: Disability; Institutional

Ethnography

Co-Organizers: Melinda Leigh Maconi, [mmaconi@mail.usf.edu] and Rebecca M. Blackwell, [rblackwell@mail.usf.edu].

Session 51: Building Pathways for Social Justice: Investigations into Educational Institutions-THEMATIC

Co-sponsors: Educational Problems; Institutional Ethnography

Co-Organizers: Alison Fisher, [alison_fisher@edu.yorku.ca] and LaNysha T. Adams, [lanysha@edlinguist.com]

Session 88: CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Putting "Hope" into Practice: Using IE to Make Real Change-THEMATIC

Sponsor: Institutional Ethnography

Organizer: Colin Hastings, [colinjh@yorku.ca]

Session 89: Reflexivity and the Self in Institutional Ethnography

Sponsor: Institutional Ethnography

Co-Organizers: Jessica Braimoh, [braimoja@mcmaster.ca] and Órla Meadhbh Murray, [orlammurray@gmail.com]

Session 90: The Social Organization of Knowledge

Sponsor: Institutional Ethnography

Organizer: Lauren E. Eastwood, [eastwole@plattsburgh.edu]

Session 91: CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Inverting Parent-Child Care: New Opportunities for Social Problems Theorizing

Co-Sponsors: Institutional Ethnography; Social Problems Theory; Youth, Aging, and the Life Course

Co-Organizers: Perri S. Leviss, [Perri.Leviss001@umb.edu] and Annaliese Grant, [aegrant2@wisc.edu]

Session 92: Health Services and Health Policies: Transforming Institutions

Co-Sponsors: Institutional Ethnography; Society and Mental Health

Organizer: Cathy Ringham, [clringha@ucalgary.ca]

Session 93: CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Small Wins: Institutional Ethnography, Social Work, and Social Welfare

Co-Sponsors: Institutional Ethnography; Sociology and Social Welfare

Co-Organizers: Michael O. Johnston, [johnstonmo@wmpenn.edu] and Megan Welsh, [mwelsh@sdsu.edu]

Future Meetings

2020 Annual Meeting

Bringing the Hope Back In: Sociological Imagination and Dreaming Transformation

August 7-9, 2020

Park Central Hotel

San Francisco, CA

2021 Annual Meeting

Program Theme: TBD

August 6-8, 2021

Swissôtel Chicago

Chicago, IL

2022 Annual Meeting

Program Theme: TBD

August 5-7, 2022

Omni Los Angeles Hotel at California Plaza

Los Angeles, CA