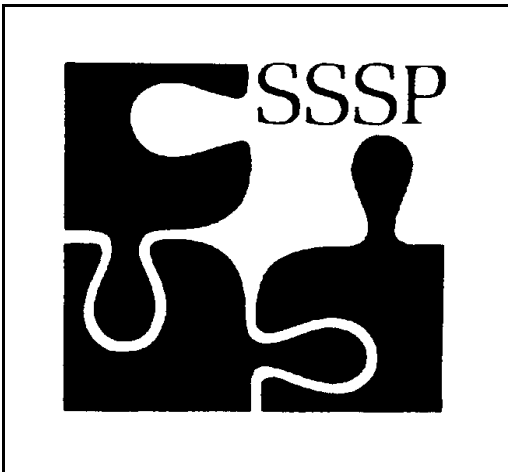


IE NEWSLETTER

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

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FROM THE DIVISION CHAIR

Marjorie DeVault

As I prepare these notes for the newsletter, I'm still basking in the pleasure of a recent Dorothy Smith visit to my campus. We had such a good time! I arranged two days of informal (but quite intense) conversation with a number of faculty here and with graduate students who are working on institutional ethnographies. Tim Diamond and Lauren Eastwood were able to join us and add their wisdom to the gathering, and we reminisced about past conferences at Syracuse University that many of you took part in. One new development here is a linkage with faculty and students in our School of Information Studies. They are quite interested in the IE focus on texts and documentary processes, and we've begun some fascinating conversations.

In addition to activities here, I want to celebrate the growth and development of institutional ethnography elsewhere. Paul Luken and Suzanne Vaughan went to Barcelona this fall, in order to begin the process of establishing an institutional ethnography 'Research Committee' (the equivalent of a division within SSSP) within the International Sociological Association. For more on this, please see Paul's item on page 7.

In addition to encouraging you to read the highlights from our IE Division Meeting in Boston this past summer, I'd like to direct your attention to an exciting list of session proposals for the August, 2009 meeting in San Francisco. The official call for papers has just appeared on the SSSP website; in addition, you can find the session listings in this newsletter (starting on page 8) along with brief descriptions provided by session organizers. I've encouraged them to indicate how they would like to shape the sessions, in order to help us build sessions that will unfold as real conversations – but we'll certainly try to make room for all members who wish to present. Feel free to contact session organizers (or me) to discuss where and how we can best include your work. *(continued)*

(Division Chair's message continued)

I call your attention especially to our session on *The Footprint of Scholarship*, co-sponsored with the Division on Environment and Technology; we're thinking of this session as a place to continue the conversation we began at last year's business meeting, on the organization of scholarly work as it intersects with new and increasingly pressing energy and climate change issues. If you have thoughts about these matters, please consider submitting an outline for a discussion paper or volunteering as a discussant.

Highlights from Boston

Ellen Pence receives 2008 Dorothy E. Smith Award for Scholar Activism



The Dorothy E. Smith Award for Scholar Activism recognizes an individual or group using institutional ethnography in innovative ways that contribute to activist goals and activities in either a single project or a longer trajectory of work. The 2008 award winner, Ellen Pence was honored at the IE Division Meeting in Boston this past summer. What follows is the text of the remarks Marie Campbell (last year's award winner) used to speak about Ellen on the occasion of her 2008 award.

“Ellen, I want you to know how delighted I am to present you with the Dorothy E. Smith Award for Scholar Activism. The committee received your nomination and put your name forward with great enthusiasm. So, Ellen, although I presume that everyone in the room already knows your work, I am going to talk about you as if they don't. I especially want to mention a few things that I think represent the importance of your contribution as an activist scholar.

There can be no challenge to Ellen's status as 'activist'. She was an activist long before she was introduced to institutional ethnography. She had worked in Duluth, Minnesota, with a group of feminist colleagues dedicated to reducing violence against women and children and, since the mid 90s, they operated from Praxis International, an organization Ellen set up.

She and her colleagues have been spectacularly successful in devising methods of working for women in various sites, in differently located institutions, and different cultures at home and abroad. This work continued and expanded after Ellen met and studied with Dorothy Smith, and earned her PhD at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, in Toronto, Canada.

Ellen sees herself as an activist and, given the opportunity, cheerfully downplays her interest in, and even her capacity for scholarship. But it is my contention that this is a mistake. I believe that Ellen has made a great intellectual contribution to how institutional ethnographers can see and understand institutional activity and its effects on people. I am

(Highlights from Boston continued)

thinking of her discovery and naming of ‘processing interchanges’. This conceptual contribution to institutional ethnography captures and expresses Ellen’s unique integration of activism and scholarly analysis.

Working on behalf of women who were suffering from actual or potential violence in their lives, Ellen walked with them as they interacted with variously situated members of justice systems – the people and programs with the mandate to protect women. Only by attending carefully to her women informants’ experiences, as observed or told to her, and treating them with care and respect, was Ellen able to recognize those moments in their contact with institutions where a change in direction, a shift in emphasis, a substitution of language happened.

She found the exact institutional arrangements (that she described and called processing interchanges) where such shifts in their response to women occurred. Of concern to her were an institution’s loss of focus on women’s lives and particularly the substitution of institutional interests for attention to women’s safety.

As institutional ethnographers, all of us have learned to use the notion of processing interchanges that Ellen has shown us. And yes, we all cite Pence when we do so. We find the concept so useful in figuring out ‘how things work’ in today’s textually constituted organizations and in the text-mediated activities of members of those organizations. Today, I’m calling explicit attention to the importance of the particular kind of scholarship that made that conceptual discovery possible. Not only as activist, but also as analyst, Ellen is *standing with* an informant closely, attentively, thoughtfully and respectfully. In this, she draws on Dorothy Smith’s teaching about taking the standpoint of the people for whom our research is being conducted. Her activist stance is what enabled her brilliant institutional analysis. It made possible her discovery of the moment that the institutional process redefined a woman’s experience, thus

abandoning her in the process of advancing the work of the institution. It is this combination of activism and conceptual clarity that makes Ellen Pence an outstanding scholar-activist.”

The George W. Smith Award for outstanding graduate student paper

Thanks to Peter Grahame of the George W. Smith Award Committee for submitting this item.

The winner of the George W. Smith Graduate Student Paper Competition for 2008 is Naomi Nichols (York University) for her paper, *Gimme Shelter: Investigating the Social Service Interface from the Standpoint of Youth*. Members of the award committee (Peter Grahame and Michael Corman) agreed that Naomi Nichols' paper represents a fruitful and insightful application of the institutional ethnography approach.

Nichols' investigation of the experiences of young people within the Canadian social service system builds on a thoughtful and tenacious engagement with the fieldwork process. Nichols develops an IE problematic by starting from the experiences of Orin, a young man seeking shelter. Noting the ideological character of categories such as ‘youth’, ‘homeless’, and ‘at risk’, Nichols grounds her account in the actual work of the young person seeking assistance. She demonstrates how Orin's practical understanding of his situation places him at odds with the complex of agencies, laws, and rules that determine his eligibility for assistance and structure his access to shelter, training, and employment. In the course of tracing Orin's activities, Nichols addresses the textual organization of Orin's location within the social assistance system. Nichols's account incorporates also reflections on the twists and turns of her own struggle to understand the system and Orin's situation within it. Further, the problematic that she develops explores connections with her activist work in community outreach and education. In sum, Nichols' study provides a very clear illustration of how a single case can be used as a

(Highlights from Boston continued)

point of departure for making visible the general and generalizing workings of an institutional complex.

Reception to Honor Dorothy Smith

Nancy Naples submitted this item on what, for many, was the highlight of highlights in Boston.

I was truly honored to serve the SSSP as President for 2007-2008. But of all the activities that are associated with the presidential role, the one that made me most proud was the opportunity I had to host a reception in the presidential suite to honor Dorothy Smith's contributions to SSSP, to feminist scholarship and to activist research.

Dorothy has been a member of SSSP for many years and has consistently supported the work of the society through her presence, her many presentations, and her insightful comments on other members' work. Her exciting scholarship and innovative approach to feminist research has led many of us to take up institutional ethnography as a method for social-change oriented research.

When SSSP approved the new Institutional Ethnography Division, we knew that we would forever have a nurturing home for the exciting conversations and shared research that had been developing over the past two decades or more and that builds on Dorothy's incredible scholarship. The reception was one small effort on my part to thank Dorothy publicly for her inspiration and her support. Other members present also shared some of their reflections on the many ways that Dorothy had inspired, encouraged, and challenged them over the years and many others emailed to say how much they have benefited from her wisdom and generosity. Here is but a small sample of the enthusiastic responses I received and of some of the comments made by those in attendance. My only regret was that, due to space, I could not offer an open invitation to all members of the society.

"This woman is fabulous - a dedicated feminist, scholar, activist, mentor and colleague. She continues to expand her vision, intellect and heart!"

-Susan Turner

"Dorothy Smith has, more than anyone of whom I'm aware, informed and provoked and inspired a coherent, critical sociology for our times. And she is a gracious person."

-Chris Wellin

"Please add my tribute and best wishes to Dorothy Smith, who has instructed, informed, and inspired my own work."

-Roxana Ng

"Dorothy E. Smith is a model for the highest quality scholarship based in integrity and accountability to everyday life. As if that were not enough, she amazingly finds time to take an active interest in the work of even the earliest graduate student and nurture us throughout our careers."

-Frank Ridzi

"Dorothy is a modest woman. Her face, as she listened to the outpouring of admiration, respect, and fondness for her at the reception, shifted between embarrassment and pleasure. This is the Dorothy I know and call a friend. She is a brilliant scholar who spends hours with her students teaching them about IE and helping them 'get their work right.' She is an outspoken feminist who doesn't suffer academic fools lightly. She stops to talk or gives change to homeless people begging on the street. She takes her teaching seriously; most students find her intimidating and then, when they begin to focus on 'the work', forget to be intimidated as she opens the world for us. She has a wonderful laugh and her sense of humor is playful and gentle. She is not a contradictory woman, she is a political woman whose politics of equity and justice inform her scholarship and her life. She has been and continues to be my mentor."

-Alison Griffith

(Highlights from Boston continued)

“Dorothy and I have been friends for 35 years, and I have gained, beyond friendship, a great deal from her intellectual work. I’ll only comment on her early insights that were critical to all my own attempts to deal with theory. Her argument that sociological thinking is socially located within an organization of (academic) activities from which women have been almost entirely excluded and that how society is thought about is shaped by that location was most fundamental for me. That recognition underlies efforts to reconceptualize societies as fundamentally shaped by gender. I want to thank Dorothy for that understanding, and for much more. Feminist sociology, as a fundamental challenge to the male structure of academic thinking, would, I believe, not exist as it is without Dorothy’s work.”

-Joan Acker

“Dorothy Smith and her writings have been central to my work and my thinking, and it’s been a great pleasure to join her in what she always insists is the collective project of developing institutional ethnography. In the words of her early essay, she has given me ‘a place to start and a way to go’. She has shown me a kind of engagement in intellectual work that inspires and sustains my scholarly commitments--and she’s also been a wonderful friend.”

-Marj DeVault

2009 awards competitions

The call for papers for the 2009 George W. Smith Graduate Student Paper Competition and call for nominations for the 2009 Dorothy E. Smith Award for Scholar Activism were recently issued. For details, please go to:

<http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/pageId/1058>

Deadline for submissions is May 1, 2009.



Dorothy Smith listening to well wishes and tributes from those attending the SSSP reception in her honor.

IE Division business meeting minutes

The IE Division held its business meeting on Thursday, July 31, 2008 from 10:30 am to 12:10 pm. Tim Diamond took minutes and provided them for inclusion in this edition of the newsletter.

Chairperson Marj DeVault opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

Twenty persons attended the meeting: Marj DeVault, Dorothy Smith, Cheryl Zurawski, Jennifer Flad, Margo Kushner, Marilee Reimer, Ellen Pence, Liza McCoy, Marie Campbell, Paul Luken, Kamini Grahame, Peter Grahame, Hongxia Shan, Nancy Murphy, Nancy Jurik, Shelley Koch, Chris Sinding, Janet Rankin, Alison Griffith, and Tim Diamond.

(Highlights from Boston continued)

Awards. Two awards were presented.

The first was the George W. Smith Graduate Student Paper Award, presented by committee chairperson Peter Grahame. He announced the winner, Naomi Nichols, of York University, for her paper *Gimme Shelter! Investigating the Social Service Interface from the Standpoint of Youth*. Naomi was unable to be present to accept in that she was met with a recent elbow injury. All in attendance applauded her paper and wished her a speedy recovery.

The second award was the Dorothy E. Smith Award for Scholar Activism, presented on behalf of committee chairperson Suzanne Vaughan by Marie Campbell. She announced the winner, Ellen Pence, of Praxis International. Marie lauded the internationally-known Duluth Model, and Ellen's major contributions to working on behalf of women suffering from actual or potential violence in their lives. Marie also spoke of Ellen's contribution to institutional ethnography in identifying 'processing interchanges'. Marie noted that they provide an organic way to move through institutional phases, enabling a reader to spot the places where women's lives become distorted on behalf of the institution.

Ellen accepted the award, with characteristic grace and humor, noting that everywhere she turns she sees texts, and thus Dorothy "really ruined things for me." Everyone understood the joke and applauded, whereupon Ellen turned the tribute back onto her teacher, Dorothy, and to the great colleagues with whom she learned her craft.

Newsletter. The chair acknowledged with gratitude the work of the newsletter co-editors, Gillian Walker, and her associate and photographer, Cheryl Zurawski. The attendees showed their appreciation with a robust round of applause.

Chairperson-Elect. The chair welcomed the Chairperson-Elect, Kamini Grahame. The attendees

also welcomed her with a round of applause and well wishes.

Resolution on Air Travel. The chair then turned discussion toward the draft of a resolution, and asked for discussion as to whether the resolution should go forward to the Society's Resolutions Committee. The issue concerned the implications for global climate change of travel (especially air travel) by conference participants, year after year, in attending academic conferences such as the annual meetings. Marj wanted to get people thinking about alternative travel and scholarly exchanges that might be less taxing on the environment. Paul and Peter addressed the absence of viable alternatives to plane and auto in the U.S. Dorothy raised the prospect of exchanging ideas and papers *without* meeting, especially given the mounting expenses of conferences (she also noted the absence of climate change news in U.S. papers). Alison thought the resolution as drafted put responsibility on individuals, and later noted that it would be a good topic for the whole Society to become reflexive about. Ellen agreed, suggesting we could add up the carbon footprint of the conference. Marilee suggested a transportation registry. Nancy Murphy suggested meeting every other year. Marj thought the topic might make an excellent session at next year's meeting, perhaps co-sponsored by one or more other divisions. The motion to table the resolution was advanced, and the attendees voted unanimously so to do.

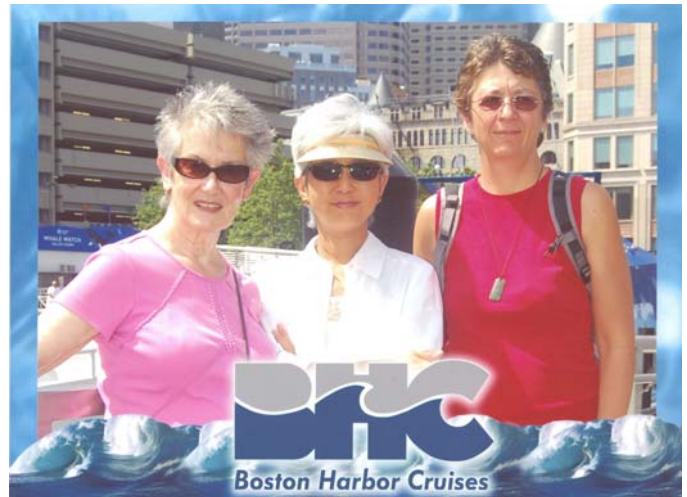
2009 Annual Meeting, San Francisco. The chair raised the topic of sessions for next year's meeting, noting that the Institutional Ethnography Division is allowed three sessions of its own, and is open for co-sponsored sessions without limit. At the Boston meetings, she announced, there would be nine co-sponsored sessions. She called for volunteers for organizing sessions and indicated that she would follow up by email with those who are interested.

The chair noted the procedure: interested parties were to title their proposed session and submit their ideas to the Division Chair, who will organize the

sessions in coordination with the overall program chairs for the conference.

Announcements. Marj announced the reception to follow in the evening, partly sponsored by the Division. Paul announced that this meeting marked the 5th Anniversary of the Division's existence. Dorothy thanked him for his work in making that happen. Kamini announced the scholarships that were available for travel to the meetings through the Lee Minority Scholarships. Marj announced that conference papers would now be available in archival form through the Conference Proceedings of the SSSP.

No further business being raised, the meeting was adjourned.



From left to-right are Marie Campbell, Roxana Ng and Janet Rankin taking time out to enjoy Boston after the 2008 IE Division Meeting.

Member news and announcements



Suzanne Paul Barcelona.

Paul Luken writes: “Efforts are underway to establish institutional ethnography sessions at the World Congress of the International Sociological Association in Gothenburg, Sweden, during July 11-17, 2010. First there is a proposal to establish institutional ethnography as a Thematic Group within the ISA. Suzanne

Vaughan and I collected signatures and submitted the required paperwork at the ISA Social Forum that was held in Barcelona in September. This proposal will be reviewed by the ISA in April 2009. In the meantime, and in case the proposal is rejected, we are currently organizing ad hoc IE sessions. These sessions require participants from several countries. If you are interested in participating in an IE session at the World Congress, please contact Paul Luken at pluken@bellsouth.net by December 31, 2008, and mention the topic that you would like to contribute to a panel. **Note:** this is not a call for papers. The ISA will announce a Call for Papers in 2009.”

Gayle Schroeder University of Guelph, 2008, announces the completion of her IE master's thesis titled: *Analyzing the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) Anti-Trafficking Processes.*

This institutional ethnography investigates how the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) coordinates anti-trafficking initiatives. The research begins by tracking the work coordination between CIDA and the Interdepartmental Working Group of Trafficking in Persons (IWGTIP), then moves to the analysis of how CIDA funds an international anti-trafficking project.

The thesis describes how CIDA's work on anti-trafficking initiatives is

coordinated in mundane, normalized day-to-day tasks and how institutional decision-making occurs. It describes CIDA employees' activities, using mapping, and thus reveals how these CIDA policy processes organize the Canadian government's work in this field.

New members

New members who have joined the IE Division since February 2008 are listed in the columns to the right. Welcome all!

Tammi Arford
Kimberly Austin
Paige Averett
Carla Barrett
Terressa Benz
Moon Charania
Laurie Clune
Claudia D. Coffield
Breinne Compton
Pauline De Fry
Julie Dumois-Sands
Brian Fair
Jeralyn Faris
Benjamin Fleury-Steiner
Amanda Garrison
Jo Ann Gray-Murray
Albert Gueissaz
Rebecca Hammond
Susan Ingram
Julene Jones

Myra Jones-Taylor
Ciara Kierans
Ryan Langley
Nicole Lavan
Zac Moore
Amrita Pande
Jeanna Parsons
Sadia Rahman
Abigail Reiter
Elizabeth Reiter
John Robinson
Brenda Roche
Tim Ross
Christine Schneider
Hongxia Shan
Roz Stooke
Christopher Wakefield
Leanne Warren
Sydney Weaver
Anita Wilson

Looking ahead to San Francisco

The IE Division will meet in San Francisco from August 7 to 9 as part of the 2009 annual meeting of the SSSP. The call for papers for division-sponsored and co-sponsored sessions appears over the remaining pages. As mentioned on page 1, members are encouraged to contact session organizers or Division Chair Marj DeVault to discuss where and how to include their work in the 2009 annual meeting.

Division-Sponsored Sessions

Title: New Research in Institutional Ethnography
Organizer: Janet Rankin, University of Calgary
Email: jmrankin@ucalgary.ca

The session provides IE'ers the opportunity to present early findings of new research or to discuss issues and challenges arising in research design or analysis. The session will provide presenters with the opportunity to consult with one another and with participants in an informal 'seminar' type format. Presenters are asked to submit abstracts that provide a background to their topic (and the politic that informs it) and that raise questions for discussion. Papers related to teamwork, funding, research

design, ethical approval, data collection, analytic thinking and emerging arguments are welcome.

Title: Focus on Methods: Discovering, Developing, and Questioning IE Problematics
Organizer: Peter Grahame
Email: pgrahame@comcast.net

Concern with developing a problematic is one of institutional ethnography's defining features. Researchers in this tradition often report that the problematic guiding their work was not obvious at first and only came into view with some difficulty. For this session, papers are invited that report on the experience of opening up and working through IE problematics. Any phase of developing a problematic might be addressed.

(Looking ahead to San Francisco continued)

**Thematic: Immigration and Racialization:
Institutional Ethnographic Studies**

Organizer: Hongxia Shan, OISE/University of Toronto

Email: hxshan@utoronto.ca

Recent writings propose that institutional ethnography can be a useful approach to explore, discover and map changes that are taking place in the new economy. This session extends such analyses to focus on ways in which labor market reorganization, both in North America and globally, intersects with immigration and racialization of groups of workers as the world moves toward an integrated global capitalist economy. It provides a forum for researchers examining changes in the labor market in terms of immigration/immigrants and racialization/racism to share their empirical findings and methodological strategies on the changing contours of these relationships.

Co-Sponsored Sessions

**Title: The Management of Disability Services:
Workers' and Users' Perspectives**

Organizer: Jeremy Brunson, Gallaudet University

Email: jeremy.brunson@gallaudet.edu

Co-sponsor: Disabilities Division

The everyday experiences of people with disabilities and the people who work with them are connected to and coordinated by local and more distant institutional processes and discourses. Using the lives of service users and service providers as entry points into the social organization of service delivery, we can begin to understand the ways in which the management of disability services is connected to what Dorothy Smith calls the 'ruling relations.' For this panel, we seek empirical or theoretical papers that explicate these connections.

**Title: The Social Organization of Health Care:
In Whose Interests?**

Organizer: Janet Rankin, University of Calgary

Email: jmrankin@ucalgary.ca

Co-sponsor: Health, Health Policy, and Health Service Division

Submissions are invited for this session that report on critical, empirical research exploring the social (re)organization of health work as it is carried out in the practices of people. Contemporary organization of health services is being driven by large-scale health information technologies that are increasingly reliant on inserting technological and/or standardizing textual interfaces at the site of health work. The new approaches are expected to direct health care practitioners' use of evidence. It is anticipated that they will optimally standardize proven screening and intervention protocols and improve the management of chronic illness. They promise to increase patient safety, optimize interprofessional practice, reduce wait times, contain costs and improve overall health services. What actually happens when health care is reorganized this way? What happens in the practices of doctors, nurses, allied health workers and the public? What are their experiences and how are they organized? Papers that explicate health practices as they intersect with the ruling relations of reorganized health services are the interest of this session.

Title: The Footprint of Scholarship

Organizers: Lauren Eastwood, State University of New York at Plattsburgh and Susan Turner, University of Guelph

Email: leeastwood@msn.com or

susantur@uoguelph.ca

Co-sponsor: Environment and Technology Division

The aim of this session is to open discussion and analysis of the energy and environmental implications of the routine work of scholarship, and the organization of scholarly venues for collaboration and dissemination of research.

(Looking ahead to San Francisco continued)

We are especially interested in discussions of academic travel and of new modes of organizing scholarly work that might minimize environmental impacts – use of new technologies and experiences of videoconferencing, work-sharing software in the production of scholarship etc. – but we welcome papers (or volunteer discussants) on any aspect of this broad topic.

Title: Institutional Technologies of Education

Organizer: Lois Andre-Bechely, California State University (Los Angeles)

Email: loisab@calstatela.edu

Co-sponsor: Educational Problems Division

The various accountability measures put in place over the past several years in contexts ranging from early childhood education to career and university education brought with them new institutional technologies such as standardized curriculum and assessment practices, and the evaluation of educational program effectiveness based on students' success in the workplace, etc. This session seeks papers that bring to light the ways in which institutional technologies have taken hold in Pre-K to postsecondary education, how they are coordinated and organized within and across educational segments, and their role in reshaping the work people in schools do.

Title: Mapping the Discursive Coordination of Global Action

Organizer: Marie Campbell, University of Victoria

Email: mariecam@uvic.ca

Co-sponsor: Global Division

Papers are being sought for this session that report research inquiring into and displaying in development organization(s) what, in institutional ethnography, we refer to as 'how things work'. Coordination of the social is understood to take place in people's actions, as social relations-enactments that are being discursively, textually, and technologically organized. With some notable

exceptions, including those working with notions of governmentality, this characterization of organization and coordination is largely missing from the scholarship of international relations and development, even its critical manifestations. The papers here are intended to extend what can be learned about the advance of ruling (or social relations of power) across institutional, geographic and disciplinary boundaries, and, particularly, to showcase the knowledge gained through mapping specific processes of coordination.

Title: Mapping Families, Jobs, and Schools

Organizer: Alison Griffith, York University

Email: agriffith@edu.yorku.ca

Co-sponsor: Family Division

This session will address the multiple intersections of parents, children, paid employment, unpaid work, and schools. These intersections are coordinated interpersonally and inter-textually. The papers will speak to research that focuses on the everyday activities through which these intersections are organized – e.g. mothers who volunteer in schools, shift-workers with children attending school, unemployed parents, full-time parents, teachers who are parents, and so on. The session will take the form of a workshop. Paper presenters will be asked to 'map' the intersections their research addresses. The mapping will take the form of (often preliminary, often simplified) visual maps. The session chair and the audience will discuss the maps in the context of their own knowledge of the intersections of texts and action.

Editor's Note: *It is with great sadness that we learned of the tragic death of our colleague and friend John McKendy, professor of sociology at St. Thomas University, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. A tribute to John's life and work will be included in the next newsletter.*