

IE NEWSLETTER

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

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Marjorie DeVault
Division Chair
Department of Sociology
Syracuse University
Syracuse, New York, USA

Send correspondence to:

Gillian Walker

Correspondence and Copy Editor

gawalker@telus.net

Send photos and other images to:

Cheryl Zurawski

Production and Picture Editor

cdz@arialassociates.com

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FROM THE DIVISION CHAIR

Marjorie DeVault

Hello again. It's time to start looking forward to another group of institutional ethnography sessions at the 2009 Annual Meeting. You'll find a listing of those starting on page 4. As usual, it's an exciting lineup, with both familiar and new faces, and I look forward to participating in as many sessions as I can. For those of you attending the SSSP Meeting for the first time, I'd like to let you know about two additional events that provide gathering spots for institutional ethnographers. Our business meeting (on Saturday, August 8 at 4:30 pm), despite its pedestrian label, is typically a large and lively gathering at which we share news, celebrate our Division awards, make plans for next year, and just enjoy some time together. For newcomers, it's a good way to meet everyone at once—and to introduce yourself! Another opportunity for productive and enjoyable mingling is the joint Division-sponsored reception (on Friday August 7 at 6:30 pm), immediately following the business meeting, with a fine spread made possible by combining funds from several Divisional budgets.

As you look over the program, it's not too early to start thinking about sessions for next year (when we will meet in Atlanta, Georgia). If you have thoughts about what's missing, or ideas for innovative topics or formats, please let me know. Over the past two years we have offered two open sessions, one for new research in institutional ethnography and one with a methodological focus. I think that has worked well, but I'd like to know what you think. And I think we should continue to plan one or two sessions each year that afford more time for discussion than the typical paper presentation format allows (this year, our "*Footprint of Scholarship*" session is meant to open that kind of dialogue)—so let us know if you have suggestions along those lines, or requests for workshop topics.

This will be my last Chair's message, since my term is coming to an end.

(continued on next page)

(Division Chair's message continued)

It has been a great honor to serve the Division, and I've enjoyed not only working with old friends but also getting to know so many new people who are becoming part of our growing network.

At the business meeting in San Francisco, I'll be handing the gavel to our incoming Chair, Kamini Grahame, who will serve for the next two years (please see item following this message). It's been a pleasure working with her over the past year in her capacity as Chair-Elect (a position we will fill again next year). I'm immensely grateful as well to Gillian Walker and Cheryl Zurawski, who have done such a fine job editing and producing our newsletter—an important resource for keeping in touch between meetings. Gillian is preparing to step down shortly, so we'll be looking for a volunteer to step into the editorship (with expert layout help from Cheryl, if desired). Please do consider taking on this job, and let us know if you're interested. See you soon in San Francisco!

Introducing our incoming Chair

Kamini sends this short biographical statement by way of introduction and looks forward to meeting everyone who will be in San Francisco.

Kamini Maraj Grahame earned her Ph.D. at the University of Toronto. Her dissertation, supervised by Dorothy E. Smith, examined the organizational processes through which immigrant women become incorporated into the U.S. labor market. She is associate professor of Social Sciences and Community Psychology at Pennsylvania State University Harrisburg, where she has served on the Faculty Senate and recently became program coordinator for Social Sciences. In 2007, Kamini received Penn State Harrisburg's Faculty Diversity Award. Her community outreach work includes longstanding service and board membership in the Pennsylvania Immigrant and Refugee Women's Network (PAIRWN). Kamini's current research looks at transnational families and the East Indian diaspora in Trinidad, the United States, and Canada.

Report from the Congress in Ottawa

--By Gillian Walker

The Canadian Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences met at Carleton University in Ottawa at the end of May. A number of sessions of interest to the IE community were presented. Among them were the following:

Institutional Ethnography and the Managerial State, organized by Dorothy Smith and discussed by Alison Griffith

- 1) "Accreditation and Government Contracted Service Delivery in British Columbia: The Reorganization of Frontline Social Service Work," Shauna Janz (sljanz@uvic.ca)
- 2) "The textual organization of organ transplantation," Elizabeth McGibbon (emcgibbo@stfx.ca).
- 3) "Managerialism as a textual performance," Naomi Nichols (Naomi.Nichols@edu.yorku.ca).
- 4) "Community organization, public services, and changing regimes of government funding," Kristie O'Neill (kristie.oneill@utoronto.ca) and Susan Turner (susantur@uoguelph.ca).



Dorothy Smith, Gillian Walker and Adele Mueller at the Ottawa Congress.

(Report from the Ottawa Congress continued)

Producing Textual Realities, organized by Dorothy Smith

- 1) “No taste for rough and tumble games: The production of boys’ gender non-conformity as disorder in the DSM,” May Louise Adams (mla1@queensu.ca)
- 2) “Systemic barriers in the Canadian federal public service—the self-identification form,” Deveau, J.L. (jlpdev@nbnet.nb.ca)
- 3) “Reading practices in/and government decision-making,” Susan Marie Turner (susantur@uoguelph.ca).

Governance in Education, chaired by Theresa Shanahan and discussed by Lindsay Kerr

- 1) “The Ginger Effect: Quality & Accountability Mechanisms & the Transformation of Social Relations of Governance in Postsecondary Education,” Theresa Shanahan (tshanahan@edu.yorku.ca).
- 2) “UUDLES of Accountability (UUDLE – University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations),” Mandy Frake-Mistak (mandy_frake@edu.yorku.ca).
- 3) “Policy and Governance in K-12,” Alison I. Griffith (agriffith@edu.yorku.ca).
- 4) “Closing the Gap: Marginalized Youth and the (Mis)management of Schooling,” Naomi Nichols (Naomi.Nichols@edu.yorku.ca)

Using Institutional Ethnography and the Sociology of Dorothy Smith for Research in Education and the Professions, organized by Suzanne Forgang Miller, chaired by Linda Muzzin and discussed by Dorothy Smith

- 1) “Professionals acquiring graduate degrees: Navigating between different textual landscapes,” Suzanne Forgang Miller (s.miller@utoronto.ca)

- 2) “Ontario’s success story? Teachers’ perspectives on the “Student Success Strategy,” Lindsay Kerr (lkerr@oise.utoronto.ca).
- 3) “New nurses negotiate power relations in community hospitals,” Jacqueline Limoges (jlimges@georgianc.on.ca).
- 4) “Food for thought: Enacting dietitians’ standpoint within the discourse of dietetics,” Angela Cuddy (angela.cuddy@utoronto.ca)

Standardizing Diversity: “Cookie Cutter” Programs for Young Children in Diverse Communities, a joint presentation organized by Roz Stooke

Roz Stooke (rstoocke@uwo.ca), Pamela Mckenzie (pmckenzi@uwo.ca), Suzanne Smythe (smythe02@shaw.ca)

Dorothy Smith was also the keynote speaker for the opening plenary of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education. Calling her talk “*Behind our Backs*” she addressed some of the themes that underpinned the many papers listed here and called for communication across the professions to identify and challenge the technologies of government that are organizing, reorganizing and reshaping the frontline work of teachers, nurses, social workers and other service professionals.

Attending these sessions as someone no longer actively engaged in the academic enterprise, I was struck by the richness and range of the material being generated by using institutional ethnography to discover the texts and technologies that implement New Public Management. The quality of the graduate students’ papers and presentations particularly impressed me; it is encouraging to see such strong contingent of scholars taking up the work. An email address is included for each of the presenters and I urge you to contact them about their work if you are interested in their areas of inquiry.

Institutional Ethnography at the SSSP Annual Meeting

Here is the list of IE sessions at the Annual Meeting in San Francisco. Note the Institutional Ethnography Division's business meeting is scheduled on Saturday, August 8 from 4:30pm – 6:10pm in the Stanford East. All committee meetings and special events are scheduled at the Stanford Court Hotel (SCH). Sessions are scheduled at the Stanford Court Hotel (SCH) and the University Club (UC), which is adjacent to the hotel. To get to the University Club (UC), exit the hotel and make a right on California Street. Go to the corner of California and Powell. Cross Powell Street, turn left and then cross over California Street. The University Club is on your right.

Friday, August 7

8:30 - 10:10 am

***Session 1: Immigration and Racialization:
Institutional Ethnographic Studies
Room: SCH-California Blue***

Sponsor: Institutional Ethnography

Organizer & Presider: Hongxia Shan, OISE,
University of Toronto

Discussant: Roxana Ng, OISE, University of
Toronto

Papers:

*“‘Luckily, her abuser is American...’ Violence
Against Immigrant Women and the Legal Guards of
Whiteness,”* Roberta Villalón, St John’s University

*“Mapping Resistance Against Racism With
Institutional Ethnography,”* Sobia Shaikh, School
of Social Work, York University

*“Engineering Barriers: An Empirical Investigation
into the Mechanics of Downward Mobility,”* Bonnie
Slade, York University

*“Discursive Skills in Operation: Immigrants’
Market-oriented Learning and the Hiring
Complex,”* Hongxia Shan, OISE, University of
Toronto

10:30 am - 12:10 pm

***Session 10: Discovering, Developing, and
Rethinking Problematics in Institutional
Ethnographies
Room: SCH-California Blue***

Sponsor: Institutional Ethnography

Organizer, Presider & Discussant: Peter R.
Grahame, Pennsylvania State University –
Schuylkill

Papers:

*“Regional Economic Development and the Quest to
‘Retain Young Workers’: Uncovering a Problematic
through Discussions with First Generation College
Students,”* Emily Porschitz, University of
Massachusetts Amherst

“The Starting Place Question,” Liza McCoy,
University of Calgary

*“Finding the Problematic: Exploring the
Relationship between Discourse and Experience,”*
Kamini Grahame, Pennsylvania State University -
Harrisburg and Peter R. Grahame, Pennsylvania
State University - Schuylkill

*“Human Subjects Review: An Institutional
Ethnography Critique,”* Paul Luken, University of
West Georgia and Suzanne Vaughan, Arizona State
University

(IE at SSSP continued)

2:30 - 4:10 pm

Session 34: Institutional Technologies of Education

Room: SCH-Fournou's Oven

Sponsors: Educational Problems and Institutional Ethnography

Organizer, Presider & Discussant: Lois Andre-Bechely, California State University, Los Angeles

Papers:

"The colonizing reach of schooling: mapping the translocal relations organizing the educational work of families with young children," Roz Stooke, Pam McKenzie and Suzanne Smythe, The University of Western Ontario

"Educational Governance Technologies in Ontario: In Pursuit of Student Achievement," Naomi Nichols, York University

"Explicating the Ruling Relations that Inhibit Inclusion for Students with Disabilities," Deanna Adams, Syracuse University

"Managing Quality or Quality Control?" Mandy Frake-Mistak, York University

4:30 - 6:10 pm

Session 43: The Social Organization of Health Care: In Whose Interests?

Room: SCH-Stanford East

Sponsors: Health, Health Policy, and Health Services and Institutional Ethnography

Organizer & Presider: Janet M. Rankin, University of Calgary

Papers:

"Migraine Diagnosis: Ruling Out the Badness," Alejandra K. Gabriel, Arizona State University, Winner of the Institutional Ethnography Division's Student Paper Competition

"Beat the Clock: Disordering Emergency Triage Work through Rapid Patient Processing," Karen Melon, University of Calgary

"'I wouldn't even call society 'society', I would call it 'struggle': surfacing the cisnormative organization of the social world through the everyday lives of trans youth," Rebecca Hammond, Dalhousie University

"Non-access to antenatal care in the UK: Women's prerogative or social problem?" Carol Kingdon, Sheena Byrom, Kenny Finlayson, Gill Thomson and Soo Downe, University of Central Lancashire

"Institutional Definitions as Cultural Constructs: Social Constructionism and Depression," Courtney Cuthbertson, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Saturday, August 8

2:30 - 4:10 pm

Session 75: New Research in Institutional Ethnography

Room: UC-Library

Sponsor: Institutional Ethnography

Organizer & Presider: Janet M. Rankin, University of Calgary

Papers:

"Writing the Language of Essential Skills into Student Training Plans: An Institutional Ethnography of Curriculum Reform in Adult Literacy Education," Christine Pinsent-Johnson, University of Ottawa

(IE at SSSP continued)

“The Social Organization of Emergency Medicine,”
Michael Corman, University of Calgary

*“Shifting problematics in an exploration of the
program work of graduate students,”* Suzanne
Forgang Miller, OISE/University of Toronto

*“Regulating Pain, An Ethnography of Torture and
the Law,”* Orlando Tizon, Torture Abolition and
Survivors Support Coalition International

*“Criminalizing HIV Non-disclosure: Responses
from Political Activist Ethnography,”* Eric
Mykhalovskiy, York University

Sunday, August 9

10:30 am - 12:10 pm

**Session 98: Mapping the Discursive
Coordination of Global Action
Room: SCH-Nob Hill**

Sponsors: Global and Institutional Ethnography

Organizer: Marie Campbell, University of Victoria

Presider & Discussant: Liza McCoy, University of
Calgary

Papers:

*“Achieving ‘results’ in international funded NGOs
in Kyrgyzstan: Aid-Effectiveness as discursive
coordination of global ruling relations?”* Marie
Campbell, University of Victoria and Elena Kim,
American University - Central Asia

*“Viewing Abu Ghraib: Congress and the
Construction of Problem Photos,”* Jared Del Rosso,
Boston College

*“Relations of Ruling, Discourses of Rights and the
Disappearance of the Child: The Dominican
Experience,”* Henry Parada, Ryerson University

4:30 - 6:10 pm

**Session 131: The Footprint of Scholarship
Room: SCH-Fournou's Oven**

Sponsors: Environment and Technology and
Institutional Ethnography

Organizers: Lauren Eastwood, SUNY Plattsburgh

Susan M. Turner, University of Guelph

Presider & Discussant: Lauren Eastwood, SUNY
Plattsburgh

Papers:

*“After the Storm: The Role of Catastrophe in Social
Evolution,”* Debra Davidson, University of Alberta

*“Reflections on ‘Heat’, Air Travel and Research
Footprints,”* Marie Campbell, University of
Victoria and Dorothy Smith, OISE/University of
Toronto

*“The Footprint of Scholarship: Questions,
Strategies, Initial Thoughts,”* Marjorie DeVault,
Syracuse University

*“What might institutional ethnography contribute to
our response to climate change or can we justify
our footprints?”* Dorothy Smith, University of
Victoria

Upcoming Annual Meetings

2010

August 13-15, 2010

**The Sheraton Atlanta Hotel
Atlanta, GA**

2011

August 12-14, 2011

**The Blackstone, A Renaissance Hotel
Chicago, IL**

Summer workshop and institute with Dorothy Smith Institutional Ethnography as Alternative Social Analysis

a) Weekend Workshop: Friday August 14th (evening) to Sunday, August 16th (\$300 US/Can)

b) Weekend Workshop followed by Intensive One Week Institute: Friday, August 14th through Friday August 21, 2009 (\$700 US/Can includes weekend) *Offering one-on-one consultation with Dorothy Smith and group discussion and development of individual research and/or publishing projects.*

Safety and accountability audit: A community-based tool for institutional reform

In the last issue we featured the first of what we hope will be a series of items on websites of interest to Division members. Casey McGee and Ellen Pence have sent the following account of their organization, its work and its website. If you are using a website or other technologies that you would like members to know about, please let us have the information.

When a woman who is being beaten by her partner calls 911 for help, she activates a complex institutional apparatus—the criminal justice system. She wants “help.” She may well have a definite form of help in mind. Perhaps she wants him removed. Perhaps she only wants her car, or child or tax refund check back. She certainly wants the violence to stop and her call to 911 is a part of her effort to make that happen. But her call is not simply a call to a dispatch center. It is also a call to her community; to the government. While she may be simply calling for help to stop the violence of someone more powerful than she, her call ends up tapping into a system of agencies and institutional processes that will process her call as a single—or more often a series—of distinct “cases” to be managed by legal and human service agencies.

Participants will be introduced to the practice of the approach and its relevance to the academy and in addressing problems of everyday life and activism.

To download a registration form:
<http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/cwse>

For more academic information: Dorothy Smith:
dsmith@oise.utoronto.ca

For general information: Aniska Ali 416.978.2080
or cwse@oise.utoronto.ca

Activists seeking to reorient the responses of institutions from the specific missions of these agencies (police to investigate and arrest, prosecution to charge and convict, mental health workers to assess and heal) to their relevance in the lives of battered women have called for coordinated responses centered on the collective goal of public safety. In these circumstances, public safety translates into the safety of battered women and their children. A strategy to securing that safety has been to shift the responsibility of holding offenders accountable for their offenses from the victims of their violence to institutions of social control. This goal is talked about in terms of offender and systems accountability. Many communities have taken up the challenge of change by organizing multi-agency reform initiatives. Increasingly those initiatives are turning to principles of institutional ethnography to determine how victim safety and offender accountability are either centralized or marginalized at specific points of intervention in domestic abuse cases.

Using institutional ethnography, change agents ask questions that focus neither on the individual practitioner nor the subjects of the cases being processed. Instead the focus is turned to explicating how practitioners’ work has been organized to standardize the ways in which they act on cases. The investigative questions become, “How is the case being put together by workers in the system in ways that produce problematic outcomes for

(Safety and accountability audit continued)

women?” and “How are workers organized to account for and enhance victim safety and offender accountability?”

In its application to the field of domestic violence, institutional ethnography has thus far been used primarily by criminal justice practitioners and domestic violence advocates rather than by academics or trained researchers. Ellen Pence, director of Praxis International, has developed a specific method of conducting an institutional ethnographic study that relies on interagency groups of systems workers and battered women’s advocates. These groups, collected as an Audit team, are charged with uncovering specific practices that produce poor outcomes relative to safety and accountability. Audit teams focus their inquiry on how the work routines of 911 operators, police officers, jailers, prosecutors, judges, and other practitioners are organized to make domestic violence cases institutionally “actionable.” Those teams conduct an assessment or “Audit” that presumes that an opportunity for centralizing victim safety and offender accountability exists at every point of interaction within those institutions. The progress and results of many communities’ work can be found on the Praxis website www.praxisinternational.org.

Member news and publications

Lauren Eastwood, Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice, SUNY Plattsburgh, recently received a fellowship from the Social Science Research Council to study global environmental governance through three United Nations-based policy-making bodies (the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, and the UN Forum on Forests). The proposal explicitly identified Institutional Ethnography as the research methodology. Over the next two years (2009-2011), Eastwood will be attending meetings associated with all three UN-based bodies, with an eye to analyzing the ways in which practitioners

negotiate policy at the intergovernmental level. She will specifically focus on the participation of civil society in these processes.

Researchers **Barbara Comber**, **Phil Cormack**, **Rosie Kerin** (University of South Australia), **Alison Griffith** (York University), **Dorothy Smith** (University of Victoria), **Brenton Doecke** (Monash University), and **Alex Kostogriz** (Deakin University) have embarked on a study titled: *Mandated literacy assessment and the reorganisation of teachers’ work*. They send this abstract:

“Australian governments have introduced mandated assessment and reporting mechanisms to make schools accountable for literacy standards. These approaches aim to standardise curriculum and assessment provision but little is known about the consequences in classrooms. How teachers adapt their practices to different contexts and learning cohorts in the face of standardising policy remains to be understood. From the standpoint of teachers, this project explores how standardised testing and reporting reorganises work in contrastive school settings. It also shows the ways teachers deploy key literacy teaching practices to account for the varied student and community populations they serve. The study will inform practitioners, teacher educators and educational policy-makers about the ways that teachers’ work is being changed by the introduction of mandated standardised assessment and reporting processes. The research will provide insights into the ways in which teachers need to adapt standardised processes and policies to account for the varied student and community populations they serve. This is significant for educational policy as recent international studies of students’ literacy performance suggest Australia is lagging in terms of equity for low SES students.”

Alison Griffith draws attention to an excellent review of **Marj Devault’s** recent book: *People at Work*. You can find it at <http://www.csse.ca/CJE/Articles/CJE32-2.html>

(Member news and publications continued)

Naomi Nichols and **Alison Griffith** have a very recent publication in the Cambridge Journal of Education: *Talk, texts, and educational action: An institutional ethnography of policy in practice*. Cambridge Journal of Education, 39(2), 241-255. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03057640902902286>

The abstract reads, in part:

“Educational governance is a textually-organized relation only accomplished in the co-ordinated actions of people as they go about their everyday work. We bring this relation into view by tracing Canadian Principals’ and parents’ descriptions of their educational work in the policy-mediated settings of public schooling in British Columbia, Canada”.

Welcome to new members

Twenty new members have joined the IE Division since the last newsletter. Welcome all!

Tahreer Araj	Christine Holman
Laura Bisailon	Felicitas Macgilchrist
Jennifer Clarke	Yolanda Martin
Matt Cousineau	Kelly Morrison
Kathleen Fitzgerald	Ana Muniz
Louise Folkmann	Raul Perez
Michael Haedicke	Leah Rogne
Kate Hickey	Brenda Tait
Jordana Hoegh	Alford Young, Jr.
Matthew Hoffmann	Anna Zajicek