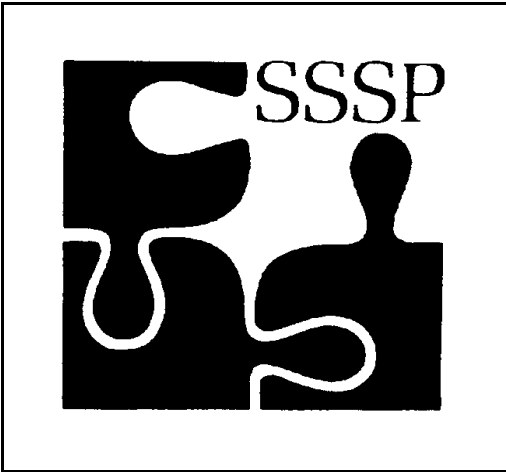


IE NEWSLETTER

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

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FROM THE DIVISION CHAIR

Kamini Maraj Grahame

Greetings to all,

It is almost time for the conference in Las Vegas and I look forward to seeing many of you there. The preliminary program is out and despite the change in location and the still struggling economy, many of you have managed to find the resources to participate in this year's meetings. The IE Division is again well represented and I am confident that we will have the most well attended sessions, perhaps surpassing our impressive performance last year. The organizers of the sessions have done a stellar job of putting together a fine program. I am pleased that everyone worked collaboratively to ensure that appropriate papers found a home. Our success reinforces for me the benefits of a decentralized system of work organization. As Division Chair I have had the good fortune to work with a dedicated team of long-term and new colleagues.

The exciting development this year is the eagerly awaited IE workshop (August 18). Our incoming Chair, Janet Rankin, with the help of her graduate assistant, led the effort which was kick-started by Chris Wellin finding space in Chicago. We thank Michele Koontz for working diligently with us to find the space at the new conference location. We are thrilled that Dorothy Smith will be joining us to share her insights and continue to provide direction for our ongoing enterprise. A preliminary program for the workshop appears in the newsletter (pages 8-9). A short list of IE sessions at the SSSP annual meeting (including co-sponsored sessions) can be found on page 9.

If you are new to SSSP, there are many opportunities to meet other scholars in the field. Be sure to attend the IE Division meeting where we celebrate award winners, plan sessions for the following year, catch up with long-time colleagues and friends and make new ones.

(continued)

(Chair's message continued)

The IE Division meeting always attracts a substantial number of members and is scheduled for Friday, August 19 from 4:30 - 6:10 pm. The co-sponsored Division reception that follows on Friday, August 19 from 6:30 - 7:30 pm is a fun venue where, along with the convivial crowd, we enjoy a tasty repast.

This is my last newsletter contribution as Division Chair. That responsibility is being passed on to Janet Rankin, who introduces herself below. As you did for me, you can make Janet's task of securing co-sponsors for next year's conference sessions easier by thinking now about possible session topics and divisions that would make appropriate co-sponsors. When the Division Chair enters the 2012 planning meeting with session names, organizers, and possible co-sponsors, she has a head start. The 2012 conference theme is The Art of Activism. As always, we are open to suggestions for new session formats and I hope that we will be able to continue with the 'new research in institutional ethnography' session.

I am pleased to be able to announce the award winner of the George W. Smith Graduate Student Paper Competition. The honor goes to Laura Bisailon, University of Ottawa. Thanks to students for submitting their papers to the competition. Many thanks to Lauren Eastwood and Li-Fang Liang for reviewing papers. Unfortunately there were no submissions for the Dorothy E. Smith Award for Scholar-Activism. Please do remember to submit nominations next year.

Finally, I wish to thank Roz Stooke, Cheryl Zurawski and Linda Shorting for the marvelous job they have done in producing the newsletter. Thanks also to all of you for helping to make the IE Division one of the most vibrant of the SSSP. Chairing the IE Division kept me busy but I appreciated the chance to become better acquainted with many of you and learn from new scholars who challenge us as we continue to develop the field. As I have matured, I have come to increasingly appreciate that there is a younger generation committed to pursuing scholarly work. I am delighted to count among them my own daughter who begins that journey this fall. It is especially meaningful in an era when critical inquiry is under assault, a corporatist culture grows in academia, and people on the front lines – teachers especially – bear the brunt of the fallout from the economic crisis generated by big banks and corporations. I am grateful to colleagues who mentor graduate students for they are essential to sustaining the project that remains a 'sociology for people'.

A message from Janet Rankin, incoming IE Division Chair

Dear IE Division colleagues,

As I prepare to assume the responsibilities of the IE Division Chair at the August meeting, I have been asked to submit a short bio to the newsletter. I still consider myself a 'junior' member of the IE family. My friends in my 'generation' of IE researchers have come to call our mentors the 'aunties and uncles' – those people who were students of Dorothy Smith when she was developing and learning the method. I will continue to consult closely with the aunties and uncles during the two years that I will be representing the IE Division at the broad SSSP level!

The experiences that prepare me for the Chair position (my IE bio) include my doctoral studies under Marie Campbell at the University of Victoria. I studied nursing work in hospitals describing and mapping some of the deleterious effects of reforms and reorganization in nursing work. Marie and I published that work as *Managing to Nurse: Inside Canada's Health Care Reform* in 2006. We were able to chronicle the historical coordination of the managerial turn in nursing when we combined my research conducted during the 1990s with Marie's own doctoral work of the 1970s.

(continued)

(Incoming Chair's message continued)



The IE Division's incoming Chair, Janet Rankin

Now at the University of Calgary I am continuing to study nurses' work using IE. Most recently I have been using Dorothy's early gender analysis – her explicit 'sociology for women', to try to understand the gendered practices of knowledge historically embedded in the 'domestics' of nursing work. I am applying for funding for a study designed to map the gendered forms of knowledge, built into the computerized techniques that streamline, standardize and organize nurses' new professionalism.

Many of you are aware that there is a grassroots 'IE working group' that has bubbled up. Loosely supported by the University of Calgary IT blackboard system and e-live meetings, the group meets monthly. We discuss people's work in progress and regularly invite guests for sessions that we call 'ask the doctor'. There seems to be a demand for this sort of venue and it is with a certain amount of curiosity that I continue to facilitate this rather organic venture. We have new participants almost every month although it is important that there is a core group of 'regulars'. The e-live technology, though free, is cumbersome. I would appreciate input into how to best support the growing number of 'independent' IE researchers who seem to be springing up across the globe.

I have been happily surprised at the relative ease (fingers crossed) with which I was able to organize the day-long workshop that is being convened in conjunction with the SSSP annual meeting this year. If the workshop is a success, I am hoping that it can be a model for supporting IE work at future SSSP gatherings. I look forward to seeing many of you in Las Vegas next month.

Regards, Janet

2011 George W. Smith Graduate Student Paper Competition Winner: Laura Bisailon

Laura is a PhD candidate at the University of Ottawa. The title of her paper is Mandatory HIV testing policy and everyday life: A look inside the Canadian Immigration Medical Examination

Abstract: This paper presents findings from a qualitative investigation into the social organization of practices associated with the government policy of mandatory HIV screening of refugee and immigrant applicants to Canada. Mandatory serotesting gives rise to serious and difficult disjunctures for HIV-positive applicants to Canada which are produced within broader socio-political contexts. Applicant, physician and federal government employee work practices associated with this HIV testing are discussed. I show how these practices contribute to the ideological work of the Canadian state, and I point out how the examination serves state rather than applicant interests. I argue that empirical research set in the material circumstances and concerns of people's everyday lives is relevant, practical, and useful for Canadian health care professionals who work with, and who are well positioned to advocate on behalf of, HIV-positive applicants to Canada.

Update on the IE Thematic Group within the ISA

In the last newsletter Paul Luken outlined an effort to create an IE Thematic Group within the International Sociological Association (ISA). This effort was successful and Alison Griffith draws members' attention to the following Call for Papers.

**SECOND ISA FORUM OF SOCIOLOGY
SOCIAL JUSTICE AND DEMOCRATIZATION
AUGUST 1 – 4, 2012
BUENOS ARIES, ARGENTINA**

Thematic Group on Institutional Ethnography (TG06)
Program Coordinator: Paul Luken, University of West Georgia, USA
pluken@westga.edu

The Thematic Group on Institutional Ethnography plans to organize as many as eight 90-minute sessions for the 2012 Social Forum in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Please note: Only abstracts submitted through [ISA website platform](#) will be considered. Proposed sessions in provisional order are summarized below.

Call for Papers

Deadlines:

- On-line abstract submission **from August 25 to December 15, 2011.**
- All Forum participants (presenters, chairs, discussants, etc.) need to pay the early registration fee by **April 10, 2012**, in order to be included in the program. If not registered, their names will not appear in the program or abstracts book.
- On-line registration will open **August 25, 2011.**

Session A: Puzzles and challenges in institutional ethnography research

Organizer and chair: Barbara Comber, Queensland Institute of Technology, Australia
barbara.comber@qut.edu.au

Because institutional ethnography is committed to a process of 'discovery' it has a significant element of uncertainty. This can be particularly challenging when it comes to writing thesis proposals, funding applications and research articles for bodies and journals that have expectations for research design which suggest predictability and replicability. A further challenge is the need to start with people's experience in the everyday embodied world of practice, but to undertake an analysis which is informed by translocal understandings of the ways in which institutions are organized. Given that institutional ethnography begins with a problematic that is substantively political, the challenge is to represent the research as open-ended whilst at the same time foregrounding the underlying social justice intent. These challenges are significant in a period where universities, and indeed university researchers themselves, are increasingly subject to audits, reviews and benchmarking to attest to the quality of their research. These conditions create new ethical and practical puzzles for researchers trying to build sustainable and just research agenda. This session invites researchers to explore how to continue to make the space for institutional ethnography within the broader repositioning of university research as just another commodity for measurement and accountability regimes.

(continued)

(ISA call for IE papers continued)

Session B: The social organization of knowledge

Session organizer and chair: Paul Luken, University of West Georgia, USA

pluken@westga.edu

Institutional ethnography (IE) investigations of the social organization of knowledge, regardless of their topical concerns, as well as theoretical discussions of institutional ethnography's approach to the study of ideology, will be presented at this session. Institutional ethnography includes a focus on ideological practice or, more specifically, ideology as practice. IE investigations discover how ideology operates in specific settings, how it shapes work practices, how it is incorporated in particular social relations, and how it produces actual consequences in people's everyday lives. These investigations differ from other studies in the sociology of knowledge in many respects, but it is the requirement that the point of departure for research be the experiences of particular people and the conditions under which they work that fundamentally separates this sociology of knowledge from other prominent theoretical approaches. It is from this standpoint in the everyday world, which includes the sociologist, that knowledge is explored as it is socially organized. Furthermore, the aim of institutional ethnography, as Smith has asserted, "is to reorganize the social relations of knowledge of the social so that people can take up knowledge as an extension of our ordinary knowledge of the local actualities of our lives." Papers addressing these concerns are welcome.

Session C: New directions in institutional ethnography research

Session organizer: Alison Griffith, York University, Canada

agriffith@edu.yorku.ca

Session chair: Naomi Nichols, York University, Canada

naomi_nichols@edu.yorku.ca

Institutional ethnography (IE) frames research across diverse topic areas. Current research explores front line work in the public sector (schooling, teaching, nursing, paramedical work, the criminal justice system, homeless shelters, group home workers), which is being managerially re-formed to facilitate stronger governance measures. A second theme in IE research addresses the work of people who coordinate (successfully or not) their everyday / everynight work with the institutions that reach into their lives, but whose everyday lives are made with, yet outside, institutions (mothering work for schooling, young people living in homeless shelters, parents' educational work with their children). A third research theme addresses the private sector (the textual organization of the 'good employee', the ideological framing of family housing). In a recent talk, Dorothy Smith (Fredericton NB, 2011) reminded the audience of the political and gendered social organization that shaped the problematic of IE. She asked: Which women are still invisible and what is the social organization that maintains their silence? This session is oriented to IE research in areas of the social that have not been fully explored, have been neglected, or that require a rethinking of our research on gender, institutional coordination, or the political grounding of IE.

Session D: Researching and working in the community

Session organizer: Naomi Nichols, York University, Canada

naomi_nichols@edu.yorku.ca

Session chair: Alison Griffith, York University, Canada

agriffith@edu.yorku.ca

(continued)

(ISA call for IE papers continued)

Institutional ethnography (IE) is useful to researchers who do community-situated or community-referenced research. An investigation that begins with participants' experiential knowledge lends itself to an emergent, community-driven, social-justice oriented research agenda. Illuminating how people's local experiences are situated in a broader field of social action, IE can also effectively inform community development or social change work. But IE's emergent and investigative framework can also pose challenges for community-based researchers and their community partners. Across institutional settings, agencies encounter an imperative to account for the social outcomes of their work with people. Against the push to remain competitive (or simply to remain open), a focus on evaluation-based research prevails. IE does not sit easily within this frame. Further, a revelation of the specific institutional practices, which systemically disadvantage particular groups of people, may not be findings community-based agencies are equipped to work with. This session invites papers that explore the strategic use of IE in community settings; the tensions and/or possibilities, which characterize research and work in the community; or the social organization of community-based research.

Session E: Transnational ruling relations

Session organizer: Paul Luken, University of West Georgia, USA

pluken@westga.edu

Session chair: Lois Andre-Bechely, California State University, USA

loisab@calstatela.edu

The institutional ethnography approach to the study of contemporary ruling relations draws our attention to all sorts of texts (forms, photographs, newspaper and journal articles, films, and so on), and this is certainly the case for those relations that operate beyond national boundaries. Transnational ruling relations are textually mediated. They are socially organized and organizing... They shape experiences internationally with respect to environmental, educational, economic, familial, and health care practices, among others. They regulate the movement of people and products across borders. These ruling relations are most explicit with respect to those large scale organizations whose activities transcend national boundaries, such as transnational corporations and international non-governmental organizations, and in multi-national political or professional organizations. Yet, these social relations are also evident in our everyday worlds – in the foods that we eat, the clothing that we wear, the music that we listen to, and the language that we speak. Papers that use institutional ethnography to explore transnational ruling relations and their consequences in our everyday lives are requested for this session.

Session F: Social justice and institutional ethnography

Session organizer and chair: Suzanne Vaughan, Arizona State University, USA

svaughan@asu.edu

This session focuses on institutional ethnography (IE) as a skill activists can use to uncover the invisible forms of ruling relevant to contemporary struggles for social justice. As Dorothy Smith (2006) notes, IE provides a tool for exploring how the relevant dimensions of the ruling relations are put together, what kinds of institutional changes will be effective and how to arrive at them. Since George Smith's 1990 seminal article in *Social Problems* on *Political Activism as Ethnographer*, those using institutional ethnography have worked with communities to address numerous justice issues. This session welcomes work which examines IE's potential for locating institutional sites of change accessible to those working for justice.

Member news: Dorothy and Alison go to Australia

In February 2010, Dorothy and I flew off to Melbourne and Adelaide. We went to do some lectures, give seminars, talk to faculty, and work with graduate students at Deakin University, Monash University, and the University of South Australia.

It was summer there! Needless to say, the Aussie hospitality was up to their international standard: we met interesting people, ate well, drank copious amounts of good wine, went to the beach, and, perhaps most importantly, listened to some excellent IE works in progress. Here's a partial list, all from graduate students in education at the University of South Australia.

Helene Lauer is looking at women music teachers and the changes in South Australian institutions that taught music between 1973 and 1990. The institutional shift was from the practice of teaching music to the more theoretical framing of music education.

Leanne Longfellow is exploring the social relations between mothers with disabled children and their teachers. Although she is 'finding the same old pattern', she also notes the political action in which these mothers engage in order to get educational services for their children. Of note is the coordination of service providers through a discourse in which mothers are missing.

Sandra Hewson sent me a copy of her proposal: *An Institutional Ethnography of Teachers' Work Implementing Curriculum Support Software*. Below is an excerpt from it.

"The purpose of the research is to explore the actualities of situated experience which cannot be viewed in isolation, but in the greater context of what Smith (1990) calls the 'ruling relations' of socially organised and text-mediated discourses operating to coordinate and organize people's everyday work. . . . From the standpoint of teachers, the study aims to go beyond an ethnographic description of teachers' experiences in implementing and using curriculum support software in their work, to explicate how discursive and social relations are operating to organise teachers' daily activities and their knowledge."

Kerry Rochford is an assistant principal in a middle school. She is looking at the construction of

'good and bad' behaviour in relation to suspensions and expulsions; a construction that negatively falls on indigenous students. She has analyzed the regulatory (boss) text that coordinates educators' action towards students. With teachers, she is working through the sequence of documents that lead to particular moral constructions of students. As is typical with education documents, she must work with and between the texts in order to understand how teachers construct the moral categories they use.

You can reach these researchers through Education at the University of South Australia.
<http://www.unisa.edu.au/eds/>

We also met the Australian research team with whom we are connected through a research project. The project: *The effects of mandated literacy assessment and reporting processes on educators' work*, is in its final year. It is headed up by Barbara Comber who is now at the Queensland University of Technology, and the research team includes Phil Cormack from University of South Australia, Alex Kostogriz from Monash University, Brenton Doecke from Deakin University, and Helen Nixon from the Queensland Institute of Technology.

The research group has gathered some interesting data from teachers whose classroom lives have changed with the NAPLAN mandated testing. I suggest you search their names through the library and read the different analytic approaches they have brought to their data. We hope to present at the American Educational Research Association in Vancouver in 2012.

New PhDs

Congratulations to Naomi Nichols who defended her dissertation on April 12, 2011.

Title: All my life I've slipped through the cracks: The social coordination of youth work.

Abstract: This dissertation is the outcome of a community-based institutional ethnography conducted at an Ontario homeless shelter for youth. I combined community development activities with an institutional ethnographic analysis using field notes, interview data, and textual analysis to discover what has happened, empirically, when young people are described as having 'slipped through the cracks'. People's descriptions of their institutional work as, and with, young people reveal a matrix of institutional relations that are mediated textually. Concentrating on people's work in institutional settings, I bring into focus complexes of social action that are produced in, and constituent of, the textually-mediated relations I describe as 'youth work'.

Welcome to new members

The IE Division welcomes the following new members who joined since the last edition of the newsletter.

Samit Bordoloi
Rose Buckelew
Ann Campbell
Rachel Craft

Elizabeth East
Andrea Fontana
Cindy Malachowski
Roula Markoulakis

David Orzechowicz
Jennifer Peet
Natalie Sampson
Bonnie Wright

IE workshop in Las Vegas on August 18

Morning (8:30 am - noon)

Welcome

Kamini Maraj Grahame, IE Division Chair

Session One

Mapping and formulating a problematic

Mapping as conceptual, as data collection and as analysis (Part One)

Alison Griffith (lead) with Lois Andre-Bechely, Laurie Clune, Lauri Grace and Dorothy Smith

Using Smith's theory of cartography and IE as a practice of 'mapping' participants in this session will bring examples of any mapping work they have done – either polished or rough drafts. The maps will be displayed (rather like a poster session) at the beginning of the session and participants will be given the opportunity to describe their maps and how they worked with them.

Formulating and holding onto a problematic (Part Two)

Janet Rankin (lead) with Alison Griffith and Paul Luken

- mapping for a problematic
- theoretical and conceptual features of the problematic (what is it)
- how to approach the problematic as a technical tool
- how to formulate a problematic from data
- choosing the problematic to follow
- doing research without a problematic

(continued)

(IE workshop in Las Vegas continued)

Afternoon (1:00 - 3:30 pm)

Session Two

Old hand questions – IE’s theoretical framework

Dorothy Smith (lead) with ‘the old hands’ (TBA)

Questions and discussion about the sociology that informs IE:

- Feminism – standpoint
- Marx – materiality; ideology
- Bakhtin – language and words
- Mead – symbolic interactionism
- Garfinkel – ethnomethodology
- Foucault – discourse

Afternoon (4:00 - 5:30 pm)

Session Three

Extending the range of IE thinking: Pushing boundaries

Marjorie DeVault (facilitator) with Liza McCoy, Eric Mykhalovskiy, Lauren Eastwood, Paul Luken and Kamini Grahame

Discuss the various ‘elements’ of IE and how they have developed and changed over time. Consider how we could engage with IE, not only as a method, but a mode of inquiry focused on particular aspects of the social that could open up other possibilities (or not) for a range of projects that don’t always look like a ‘classic’ IE. This session will be formulated around the following questions:

- What are some of the different types of research that might spring from the basic ontology and orientation of this mode of inquiry?
- How can we support students who are drawn to IE/SOK and who are equally drawn to ANT and/or studies of governmentality?
- What are we reading and doing that is informing our thinking and research practice? How might that shape the ongoing development of IE?

A few workshop spaces may still be available. To register, please go to:

<http://www.regonline.com/Register/Checkin.aspx?EventID=951957>

IE sessions in Las Vegas from August 19 to 21

[Click here](#) for details of the current preliminary program. A short list of sponsored or co-sponsored IE sessions is provided below.

Friday, August 19

Session 6: The Politics and Organization of Schooling and Food Policies in Four Institutional Ethnographies from Canada and the US

Session 20: New Research in Institutional Ethnography (Part I)

Session 30: New Research in Institutional Ethnography (Part II)

Saturday, August 20

Session 51: Methodological Issues in Institutional Ethnography

Session 61: Institutional Ethnography and the Social Organization of Health Care

Sunday, August 21

Session 98: Critical Analysis of Governance: Institutional Ethnography and Global Studies

Thematic Session 105: Community engagement, activism and institutional ethnography

Session 140: Youth, Schools, Communities, and "Justice"