

Institutional Ethnography

Newsletter of the International Sociological Association Thematic Group 06

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From the President...

With snow on the ground, ice on the roads, and winter setting in, what a pleasure to think back to July in Toronto and our TG06 sessions at the ISA World Congress of Sociology. I'd like to mention three particular highlights for me.

1) It was no surprise that the session on the work of Dorothy Smith, featuring Dorothy herself (along with Kamini Maraj Grahame, Frank Wang, and Colin Hastings; chaired by Marj DeVault) attracted an audience from across the Congress so large it spilled out into the hall. Later that day, when I was sitting in one of the few chairs in the public area of the convention centre, I overheard one graduate student enthusiastically telling another graduate student about the session and Frank's moving account of his personal and research trajectory after encountering Dorothy and her work.



ISA World Congress TG06 Panel. Left to right Colin Hastings, Dorothy Smith, Frank Wang, and Kamini Maraj Grahame.

2) At the TG06 business meeting, Paul Luken, past vice-president and program coordinator, was honoured for his foundational contributions to TG06 with a tribute from past president Alison Griffith (see the text of her tribute on p. 3). Also, at the meeting, TG06 members generated several promising ideas for ways we can support students and new IE researchers and facilitate connections across our growing international network. A mentoring project is under development – we'll be able to update you in the next newsletter.



Keynote speakers at the IE workshop held at Ryerson University. From left to right: Susan Turner, Julia Bomberry, and Amye Werner

3) It was great to have the opportunity to gather one last time, with food and drink, at the special IE workshop and reception held on the campus of Ryerson University. The keynote presentation by Julia Bomberry, Susan Turner, and Amye Werner about their community-based research collaboration was inspiring and left us all with much to discuss. Thank you to Kathryn Church and the staff from Disability Studies at Ryerson University for hosting the event and making it possible!

Thank you to everyone who came to TG06 sessions, who organized or chaired sessions, who presented papers, who took part in discussions and meetings – your energy and contributions made our part of the Congress the success that it was.

Summer 2019 conference opportunity: For those of you in North America – or with a good travel budget – the Institutional Ethnography Division of the Society for the Study of Social Problems will be running IE sessions as part of SSSP's annual conference, to be held in New York City, August 9-11, 2019. For more information and the call for abstracts (deadline January 31, 2019), go to sssp1.org.

Our next TG06 gathering will be in July 2020 at the Fourth ISA World Forum of Sociology, in Porto Alegre, Brazil. That may seem a long way in the future, but planning our program is a lengthy process that will start soon. Rebecca Lund is our new Program Coordinator for TG06. You'll be hearing from her in the new year, with a call for session proposals.

In the meantime, as the old year draws to its close, I wish you all a happy, productive and healthy year in 2019. And, at a time when the dangers of climate change are becoming more pronounced and hostile waves of nationalism are getting stronger, I wish for us all the strength and innovative vision to continue working for social justice and environmental sanity, in whatever ways we can.

Liza McCoy

From the Newsletter Editor

Welcome to the tenth issue of the ISA TG06 newsletter! In addition to our regular greetings from our President, Liza McCoy, this issue features a heart-felt acknowledgement from Alison Griffith of the tremendous organizational work Paul Luken has done over the years to create a vibrant and successful ISA IE Thematic Group. Congratulations Paul on your incredible contribution!! Also featured are some thought-provoking reflections from Rebecca Lund and Marjorie Devault about the IE presentations they attended at the ISA meetings in Toronto this summer. We've also included brief minutes from the TG06 board meeting held at the ISA conference. The minutes identify some important initiatives that the TG06 board and members will be pursuing over the next year. Finally, Debra Talbot offers us an insider's view of the discussions that took place during at the virtual reading group organized by two Australian IE discussion groups. The discussions were focused on a dialogue with Dorothy Smith recently published by Kearney and colleagues and featured discussant remarks from Barbara Comber.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue of our newsletter. Please remember that in order for the newsletter to be a continued success we need to hear from you. We want to hear about your ideas for content and we want to share information about your publications, your research, readings that you've done, conferences that are upcoming or that you've attended, career milestones and accomplishments, scholarly events and other matters of interest to your TG06 colleagues. If there's something you'd like to see happen in the newsletter send an email to me with your suggestions. And

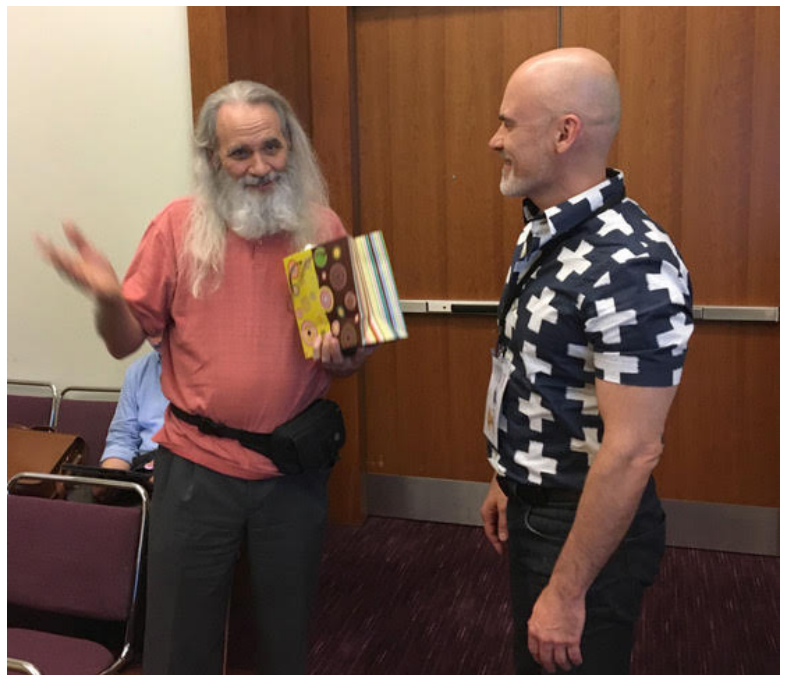
If you'd like to be featured in our Getting to Know Our Members section send us a bio. Don't be shy. This is your newsletter!

Eric Mykhalovskiy

Acknowledging Paul Luken: Toronto 2018

Alison Griffith

Our ISA meeting this year was a special one for the Institutional Ethnography Working Group (TG06). Toronto is one of the birthplaces for IE. We began a half a century ago with Dorothy Smith's vision of a different sociology; grounded in the insights generated by the women's movement of the 1960's as we were able to combine them with a range of liberatory philosophies. This year's Toronto ISA meeting is a milestone in the development of IE as a global sociology. Our membership in the ISA is growing, we are becoming more diverse, and we have more international participants than ever before. In a sense, we have come full feminist circle back to Toronto, to meet ourselves and others in this larger forum.



Paul Luken is presented a gift by Eric Mykhalovskiy in acknowledgment of his organizational contribution to the IE Thematic Group.

We often story our history as one of Hero(ine)s, brilliant research, exciting articles, PhD scholarship and books. But there is another story behind the razzle dazzle of individual and discursive milestones. I'd like us to shift our thinking from an ideological history of IE, to a (brief) IE history of IE. I want us to recognize and acknowledge the brilliant institutional work of Paul Luken over the past two decades as he constructed, sometimes almost single-handedly, the possibility of our ISA meeting here in Toronto. I'd like us to add Paul Luken to our history as one of the heroes that brought IE and us as IE researchers into a public forum with global connections.

Conferences are usually experienced as individual moments in the spotlight. As individuals, we attend to extend the social reach of our research from our desks to the discourses in which we want to embed our scholarly work – to present a paper, article, poster, or keynote as a textual record of our work over the past few months or years. But conferences are also organizations. Behind our individual participation

is a work organization, similar to housework, that is ongoing, often invisible, and absolutely essential for constructing our meetings as a discursive moment. Conferences are textually-mediated events: we synchronize presentations, publications, and citations to build the IE discourse. And, just like housework, any one moment is dependent on the hundreds of hours of behind the scenes work of many others whose coordinated work is essential but almost invisible. (I am reminded of the 1000+ page conference program).

This is where I'd like us focus our IE acknowledgement today – in the ongoing, often invisible, excellently organized work that Paul Luken has done over the past many years acting as Board Member, Program Coordinator, paper presenter, support for the President and Board Members, and so on. (Of course, he didn't do it all himself but he may be the only one who knows the full story).

Certainly, the work of institutionalizing IE can be traced back to those first publications of Dorothy Smith and her graduate students at the University of British Columbia. Or perhaps to the IE conferences and workshops organized at York University, the University of Victoria, Arizona State University, and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. But I'd like to focus on Paul's creative organizational work, going back to the years when Paul and Tim Diamond organized a new Division for the Society for the Study of Social Problems. The SSSP is an American-based association with international links. Making IE one of the Divisions in the SSSP gave us a place to present our research and academic work to a larger audience (sort of like marketing, academic style). Tim, Suzanne Vaughn, and Paul were central to getting the administrative and leadership work required to make the Division a reality – recruiting people to put the sessions together, contacting scholars who would present papers, coordinating abstracts into sessions into a conference. Pulling together the venue, the audience, and the presenters that would construct the discursive possibilities that are provided by a yearly international conference. Just think for a moment of the amount of work that needed to be done – administrative mostly. Work that depends on a knowledge of how conferences are accomplished. The work to translate the textual organization of a discourse into the conference experience.

Fast forward a decade or so following Paul's itchy institutional feet. IE scholarship is now known in Canada, the US, Australia, the Scandinavian countries, and China among other countries. But there's a bigger world out there – certainly a more global sociological discourse than what we had been able to accomplish to date. Paul thought that could be accomplished if IE was to become a presence in the ISA. So, he started with the paperwork for joining the organization, talking with (at times) skeptical IE'ers, contacting IE'ers in many countries to ask if they would organize sessions and present papers. Paul's contacts with IE scholars gave him the basis to draw together an international Board, which would link the ISA bureaucracy to the smaller Institutional Ethnography Thematic Group – that's us. Obviously, he was successful. Backed up by many of us, most particularly Suzanne Vaughn of the University of Arizona, Paul has accomplished the ongoing, everyday administrative housework required to get IE from small conferences to the global stage of sociological discourse.

For all those years of amazing, often invisible work of putting IE on the international landscape. For doing it with grace and finesse. For expanding our IE horizons, and setting the stage for the next great leap, I'd like to say from the bottom of our collective heart: Thank You Paul Luken. Your skillful

collaboration with Suzanne Vaughn, and many other IE scholars has brought us to Toronto, with a broader discourse base and all the possibilities for knowledge that global citizenship provides.

Reflections about the IE Presence at the ISA Conference

Rebecca Lund

The Metro Convention center and the ISA world congress is gargantuan. I walked through an inside-scape of maps, information counters, tourist stands, press stands and editors, coffee stands, ad hoc working arrangements, toilet queues, registration counters. Also featured were thousands of sociologists with confused looks on their faces. In that I find comfort: If nothing else, we have in common that we are here, now, and that we are trying to figure out where we are going. After some searching I find the room where I will be spending the majority of my temporary residence in Toronto. I immediately see familiar faces; Eric, Paul, Marjorie, Liza, Dorothy, and from back home, I see Ann Christin. I also see new faces and wonder who they are. I probably also see faces of people whom I have encountered before, but have (embarrassingly) forgotten. I can only hope that they reintroduce themselves, so I might get the chance to apologize and meet again. Regardless, it is exciting; and I wonder what everyone will bring to the stream. I am excited about discussing our Institutional Ethnography practice with colleagues from all corners.

I am sitting now in chaotic Toronto Pearson Airport, reflecting on our Thematic Group sessions. It was great that we had such a large turn-out and also that so many people came to hear Dorothy speak about how "words can organize." I was particularly excited about the ideas and thoughts that many of the PhD students brought to our discussions, and thinking about what these will bring to bear in the future of IE.

During our IE business meeting Paul Luken received the plaudits he deserved for all the work he has done to make it possible for IE'ers from around the world to meet at ISA. These opportunities are indeed very important, and I am very grateful for the chances I have had to meet and discuss with IE colleagues from around the world. Also, I became volunteered to take on the role of Programme Coordinator for the ISA Thematic Group of IE. This means more work for me, but also a fantastic chance to be in touch with IE'ers the world over, as we prepare for the next ISA meeting in Brazil. Cannot wait to see everyone again!

Marjorie DeVault

Several times, I've heard Dorothy Smith talk about circulating her earliest feminist articles, back in the time before email and the internet, when we typed our drafts on typewriters and then made purple-inked copies on mimeograph machines. Did she just hand them to students and friends? Pass them out at lectures and conference sessions? Mail them to colleagues? Somehow, they traveled, and people responded. Those responses let her know that there was an audience for her ideas and there were

readers who shared her interests and commitments. So, it is, I think, when we gather for our conferences. For me, institutional ethnography comes alive when I meet with other IE'ers and we talk together.

This year, I was struck by the variety of IE approaches represented in our sessions. Some studies, of course, focused on particular "ruling" texts and their consequences. Some explored broader discourses. Some—especially those featured in the session on "bodies and spaces"—examined the coordination of experience via built environments. We heard about the organization of work and of emergent industries; professionalization and resistance to it; new fields of knowledge; and technologies used in new ways. Dorothy Smith shared her recent thoughts on language and suggested that when we talk about a text, it may be useful to attend more closely to its words. I was also interested to learn of the different regional IE working groups that have formed in different parts of the world. And there were discussions of working across languages, and the significance national inflections of ostensibly global discourses and management tools.

Some speakers got me thinking about the interpretation of texts. For example, Kinnon McKinnon offered a critical discussion of assessment protocols used in transition medical care for transgender people, who strategize about whether and how to disclose information about mental health problems. But some experienced physicians interpret those assessments with a knowledgeable nuance and subtlety that allowed them to act more empathetically than a stricter reading might suggest. I was also thinking about interpretation as Kjeld Hogsbro highlighted the conflicting ruling relations at play in the facility he studied ethnographically, a residential home for people with cognitive problems. He discussed the challenges—and mental strain—of working in a "crossfire" of different discourses and regulations, and I was curious about how staff in different positions interpret regulations and reconcile them with their own views of good practice. We sometimes discuss such issues in terms of subversions or work-arounds, but these presentations made me think about analyzing them more closely, in relation to the gaps and elasticities of language-in-use and the resulting, inevitable, complexity of coordination through words.

Finally, Frank Wang's tribute to Dorothy was one of the highlights for many of us. It was a compact, moving, very personal intellectual autobiography that captured his struggle as an international student in Canada and a gay man looking for scholarly models that made sense. Expressing so compellingly his gratitude and affection for Dorothy, the remarks captured emotional sources of our scholarship and collegiality that are too rarely acknowledged—and I know that he spoke, in that regard, for many in the room.

Thanks to all who participated. I look forward to our next meeting.

Brief Minutes from the IE Thematic Group ISA Business Meeting 17 July 2018

Secretary/Treasurer's Report (Suzanne Vaughan)

Membership: As of July 15, 2018 T06 has 70 regular or student members in good standing. (Regular and student members in good standing means that members have paid dues to both ISA and T06). Our members are drawn from 24 countries across the globe representing a twofold increase in diversity. These countries include: Germany, Brazil, United States, Egypt, United Kingdom, Israel, Canada, New Zealand, Philippines, Argentina, Czech Republic, Belgium, Australia, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Finland, Vietnam, Norway, Chile, Italy, and Poland. Since February, 2018 14 new members have joined our thematic group.

Finances: As of February 2018 we had collected \$3040 USD in dues. New members since February, 2018 have contributed an additional \$380USD totaling \$3420. The T06 Board approved the expenditure of \$750 USD for the Workshop on Doing Institutional Ethnography in/with Community Organizations being held July 19, 2018 in conjunction with the ISA World Congress of Sociology in addition to paying the conference registration fee for our invited panelist, Dorothy E. Smith. Treasury balance is approximately \$2200USD.

Newsletter Editor's Report (Eric Mykhalovskiy)

We produced one issue of the IE newsletter in 2017 and hope to produce two issues in 2018. We've changed the format a bit and introduced what we hope will be two recurring sections to the Newsletter: "Getting to Know our Members" and "What are you Reading." Finding content for the newsletter can be a challenge. We encourage all our members to respond to contribute to the newsletter.

Next elections

The current Board and Executive hold office until December 2020. Elections for the 2021-2024 term will be held in 2020.

Program Coordinator

Paul Luken is stepping down as program coordinator. Paul described the work involved and was thanked for his work over the years. A statement from past president Alison Griffith was read out and a gift presented. Alison's statement will be reproduced in the newsletter. Rebecca Lund has volunteered to take on the role of program coordinator for the Brazil Forum in 2020.

Discussion Items

1. Should we seek reclassification as a working group?

Reclassification does not bring more resources. It's unclear whether it carries voting rights. But it is a next step in organizational growth at ISA. Working groups have more prestige than thematic groups. Support expressed for executive to take steps towards reclassification.

Action: Executive to pursue reclassification.

2. TG relationship to SSSP IE division?

General discussion of how some ISA research groups exist as semi-autonomous organizations with their own independent activities (mini-conferences) and relationships with other organizations. We need to consider how to move in that direction, including discussion with SSSP IE division about potential joint activities. No volunteers or specific action recommended.

3. Recruiting new members?

Joint sessions with other ISA groups might be a way to attract new members. No specific direction made although this suggestion should be made to Rebecca Lund.

4. Developing Mentorship Activities.

Discussion of developing mechanisms and approaches for mentoring new members and newcomers to IE. Some suggestions: (a) create a roster of established IE researchers who are willing to mentor newcomers through personal connections over email, meetings, etc. Perhaps best to organize this into disciplinary groups (e.g. education, health, social work, sociology, etc.); (b) explore possibilities for a webinar or other electronic capture of mentoring activities that can be made available or distributed through our website/newsletter.

Action: Lois will follow-up with a letter describing what a mentorship initiative might look like and asking for established IE practitioners to volunteer. Suzanne will distribute the letter to our membership over email.

Debra Talbot will record discussions of the Australian reading groups (the University of Sydney IE Reading Group - coordinated by Debra Talbot; and the Queensland University of Technology Reading Group – coordinated by Nerida Spina) and make it available electronically to the membership. Follow-up with Suzanne for distribution.

5. Create TG06 award

Some discussion of whether to establish a TG06 award e.g. for best book, article or dissertation. Concern expressed about language issues and how to adjudicate manuscripts that are not written in English. An award for students that involved some funding to attend the conference would be helpful. Special invited sessions that target student papers might be helpful. General discussion of ways to support students, junior scholars through our activities.

Action: Adriana and Lois to connect to develop a plan for how to support students and emerging scholars through our activities.

6. Joint projects and other initiatives to strengthen international collaboration.

Discussion of possible edited collections, the need to establish a roster of reviewers who can review IE articles given problems in securing appropriate reviews for journal articles.

Action: Debra Talbot to identify possible journal for a special section or issue focused on IE.

Virtual IE Reading Group

Deborah Talbot

Colleagues interested in IE as a mode of inquiry have been meeting regularly now for a couple of years at the University of Sydney (USYD) and at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) to discuss our work and to read the work of others. On 2 October 2018, we shared our first virtual reading group with Professor Barbara Comber as discussant. Barbara interrupted her leave, hiked to the top of a hill in the Australian bush, and hot-spotted from her phone to join us in the Zoom room. Grainne Kearney, one of the authors of the selected reading, *Institutional Ethnography: a sociology of discovery – in conversation with Dorothy Smith* also zoomed in.

We began our meeting with an update from several QUT doctoral research candidates on progress with their current research. They had posed discussion questions related to the definition of ruling relations and whether or not it was appropriate to name ruling relations at the beginning of the inquiry as a way to direct our analytical gaze on a particular problematic. Barbara provided clarity around the concept of ruling relations as the trans-local ways that life is organized with a focus on power and regulation (Smith, 1987, p. 3). She discussed how IE has made a difference to the way in which she conducts critical participatory action research (CPAR). Barbara's experience is that IE really helps her as a researcher to hold off on judgement as she maintains a focus on working out how things are put together. She does this by keeping a number of questions at the forefront of her research practice including: Who or what is being organized? How is their everyday work being organized? How is the work of others being impacted by the informant's interpretation of the ruling relations? This last question is particularly salient to the tracing of work practices and texts developed in a local context that may or may not reflect the original intention of the institutional body that set out to rule from a distance. Barbara pointed out that naming the ruling relations up front is not the same as acknowledging your immersion in the field. That in fact, it would be wise to avoid such pre-categorisation and rather describe your involvement as a frontline worker. In this way the risk of institutional capture might be avoided and a more open appreciation that the "forensic work" of IE can end up taking you in a different direction to what you might have assumed at the outset of the inquiry can be maintained.

Turning to a closer discussion of the reading, we considered how as IEers we might respond to two provocations raised by Dorothy Smith 'in conversation'(Kearney et al., 2018):

1. "...not making the connections with the possibility of making change" (p. 298);
2. Resisting: the reduction of the individual 'knower' to a kind of category (p. 295); using the informant as data (p. 296); and relying on causal logic (p. 301).

Barbara's insight reminded us that often the institutional logic of doctoral research timelines provides barely enough time to understand what is going on in relation to the problematic. The change made through the process of IE inquiry may not happen or be evident by the time the PhD thesis is submitted or the funded grant comes to an end. We all empathized with Dorothy's frustration here as something we each experienced and acknowledged that change is never simple. Uncovering the ruling relations and how they impact front line workers being only the first step. This brought us to consideration of how we might write, as IEers, of inquiry as a continuing practice; an account of research as a text-action-text sequence in its own right. In such write-ups of our inquiries we also need to be watchful that we are not introducing causal logic. Having exposed the ruling relations we must not imply that changing a step or two here and there will necessarily result in an alternative outcome. We need to be self-reflexive and not just replicate, even in a critical sense, the processes that delineate the ruling relations. Dorothy Smith wants to contest simplistic logics of 'quality', a discourse so prevalent in education, and how this 'quality' might be achieved. Barbara saw this as an important move in Smith's work, that is thinking about the exercise of power in relation to the production of subjectivity and the possibilities for resistance in situ.

Kearney, G., Corman, M., Gormley, G., Hart, N., Johnston, J., & Smith, D. (2018). Institutional ethnography: A sociology of discovery - in conversation with Dorothy Smith. *Social Theory & Health*, 16, 292-306. doi:10.1057/s41285-018-0077-2

Smith, D. E. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology of knowledge*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

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Nerida Spina, Queensland University of Technology

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